ASSERTION: THE CONTEXT SENSITIVITY DILEMMA

Mona Ioana Simionescu

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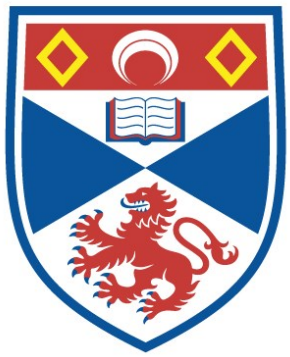

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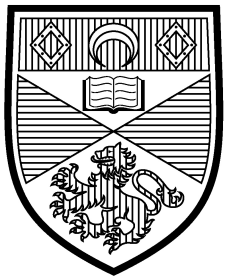

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Sources

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Published/Accepted for Publication

- Forthcoming. Criticism and Blame in Action and Assertion (with C. Kelp). *Journal of Philosophy*.
- Forthcoming. Epistemic Norms and He Said/She Said Reporting. *Episteme.*
- Forthcoming. Norms of Belief (with C. Kelp and H. Ghijsen). *Philosophical Issues*.
- Forthcoming. Knowledge, Rational Credibility and Assertion: The Scoreboard. *Epistemic Reasons, Epistemic Norms and Epistemic Goals,* ed. M. Grajner and P. Schmechtig. DeGruyter Berlin/Boston.
- Forthcoming. Assertion: Just One Way to Take It Back. *Logos & Episteme*.
- Forthcoming. The Tertiary Value Problem and the Superiority of Knowledge (with C. Kelp). *American Philosophical Quarterly*.
- Invited. The Constitutive Norm View of Assertion (with C. Kelp). In Goldberg, S. (ed), *Oxford Handbook of Assertion*. Oxford University Press.
- 2016. Perception, History and Benefit. *Episteme, 13* (1), 61-76.
- 2016. Non-Probabilistic Decision Strategies Behind the Veil. *Journal of Value Inquiry*, 50(3), 557-572.
- 2015. Assertion: Knowledge is Enough. *Synthese.* Online First.
- 2015. Commodious Knowledge (with C. Kelp). *Synthese.* Online First.

Under Review

- No Epistemic Norm for Action
- Pelling on the Epistemic Norm for Telling
- The C-Account of Assertion: A Negative Result (with C. Kelp)
- Assertion: The Context Sensitivity Dilemma
- Seeing and Believing: The Norm Commonality Assumption
- The Real Problem with Epistemic WAMs

Abstract

It looks as though many[1] philosophers assume that the intuitive variability of proper assertion with practical stakes motivates the following dilemma: either (1) we embrace a knowledge norm of assertion (KNA), and are forced into a view that takes knowledge, or 'knowledge' to be sensitive to practical stakes, or (2) we stick to our classical invariantist (CI) guns, but then KNA goes out the window and we get practical sensitivity in the normativity of assertion. Let us dub this The Sensitivity Dilemma.

This dissertation aims to bring this implicitly assumed dilemma to centre stage in order to then take a step back. It is argued here that the Sensitivity Dilemma is a false dilemma: a biconditional knowledge norm of assertion, I argue, is perfectly compatible with Classical Invariantism. And, more ambitiously, the dissertation aims to offer independent reason to believe that, if Classical Invariantism and KNA are true, shiftiness in assertability is exactly what we should expect. To this effect, I put forth a functionalist rationale for KNA, in a classical invariantist framework. I argue that not only are the data at hand friendly to CI and KNA, but, if we look at the main epistemic function of assertion, KNA readily follows.

I begin by arguing that the Sensitivity Dilemma rests on deontic equivocation. To this effect, Chapter #1 draws an important distinction between epistemic norms and mere norms with epistemic content. In the light of this distinction, I argue that a knowledge norm for assertion need not imply context sensitivity of either knowledge/knowledge attribution or proper assertion. Now, say that it turns out that the knowledge norm of assertion, in its biconditional form, is perfectly compatible with the shiftiness data. Does that also mean that KNA is correct? The answer, of course, is 'no'. After all, empirical adequacy is shared by several of the competing views on the market. We need further reasons to believe KNA is the correct account. Chapter #2 looks at several extant attempts to provide a rationale for KNA, and finds them wanting.

In Chapter #3, I offer an alternative answer to the rationale question: assertion, I argue, is governed by a particular epistemic norm in virtue of serving a particular epistemic function. More precisely, according to the proposed account, a biconditional knowledge norm of assertion drops right out of assertion's epistemic function of generating testimonial knowledge. Chapters #4 and #5 defend, in turn, the necessity and sufficiency directions of KNA against the classical objections in the literature**.** I argue that: (1) The necessity claim involved in KNA scores better than weaker norms when it comes to both accommodating linguistic data and explaining how a speaker can be blameless,

[1] For an explicit statement of the Sensitivity Dilemma, see (DeRose 2002). For people embracing the first horn thereof, see, e.g. DeRose (2002), Hawthorne (2004). For champions of the second horn, see e.g. Brown (2010), Gerken (2012), Goldberg (2015), Greenough (2010).

yet in breach of the norm, and (2) The sufficiency direction of KNA survives the intuitive need for more than knowledge in cases put forth by Jessica Brown and Jennifer Lackey, since the latter is not sourced the epistemic norm governing assertion, but in further norms with epistemic content stepping in and raising the bar.

Last but not least, in Chapter #6 I argue that several theoretical virtues, such as simplicity and prior plausibility, favour my functionalist account over extant competing explanations of the shiftiness data.

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Introduction

There are good and bad assertions. It often feels natural to say things like 'Good that you said so!' but also to criticize speakers by asking 'Why would you say such a thing?' when their assertions seem inappropriate. On top of this, it looks as though assertions can be good or bad in a distinctively epistemic way: notions such as knowledge or justified belief figure prominently in our evaluations of each other's speech acts. We do, for instance, challenge assertions by 'Do you know that?' questions, when we suspect the speaker does not find herself in a strong enough epistemic position to assert.

In the light of this, it comes as no surprise that epistemic normative constraints on assertion are of central concern in recent literature. Also, we should expect questions pertaining to the nature of the corresponding epistemic standings to carry significant weight when it comes to the normativity of assertion.

Now, here are two attractive theses, both of which enjoy a great deal of popularity:[1]

The Knowledge Norm of Assertion (KNA): One's assertion is epistemically permissible iff one knows that p.

And

Classical Invariantism (CI): The truth value of knowledge claims is insensitive to practical matters.

I, alongside many other epistemologists, care a lot about these two claims. In fact, if there is anything philosophical I find extremely plausible, these two theses are it. Furthermore, theoretical considerations speak in favour of not quickly abandoning either of them. First, friends and foes alike agree that CI is the default epistemological position: we need to be argued out of it. Given its centrality to epistemological affairs, the argument on offer should be good.

Second, if knowledge is both necessary and sufficient for epistemically permissible assertion, we have a very straightforward and elegant way of explaining quite a few otherwise puzzling linguistic data, such as: the paradoxical soundingness of Moorean statements of

[1] For support for KNA, see e.g. Williamson (2000, 2005), DeRose (2002), Hawthorne (2004). For attempts to defend KNA in a classical invariantist framework, see e.g. Williamson (2005) and Turri (2010).

the form 'p but I don't know that p'; the unassertability of lottery propositions; 'How do you know?' challenges; last but not least, (intuitively permissible) criticisms such as 'Why didn't you say so? You knew it all along!'.

Now, plausible (and popular) as they might be, surprisingly enough, CI and KNA are widely taken to be incompatible. Here is one prominent argument for their incompatibility, by Keith DeRose (2002): intuitively, standards for proper assertability vary across practical contexts: in high stakes but not in low stakes scenarios, more warrant seems to be needed for one to be in a good enough epistemic position to assert. Given this, we cannot have an invariant standard for proper assertability: a knowledge norm of assertion is incompatible with classical invariantism. Since we need to place the source of the felt sensitivity somewhere, one of the two has to go.

It looks as though many[2] actors in the debate assume that the intuitive variability of proper assertion with practical stakes motivates the following dilemma: either 1) we embrace KNA, and are forced into a view that takes knowledge, or 'knowledge' to be sensitive to practical stakes (henceforth knowledge sensitivism), or 2) we stick to our classical invariantist guns, but then KNA goes out the window and we get practical sensitivity in the normativity of assertion (henceforth assertion sensitivism). Let us dub this The Sensitivity Dilemma.

This thesis is in the business of bringing this implicitly assumed dilemma to centre stage in order to then take a step back. It is argued here that the Sensitivity Dilemma is a false dilemma: a biconditional knowledge norm of assertion, I argue, is perfectly compatible with Classical Invariantism. And, more ambitiously, the thesis aims to offer independent reason to believe that if Classical Invariantism and KNA are true, shiftiness in assertability is exactly what we should expect. Furthermore, I offer a functionalist rationale to back up KNA in a classical invariantist framework. I argue that not only are the data at hand friendly to CI and KNA, but, if we look at the epistemic function assertion is plausibly meant to fulfil, KNA readily follows.

Outline

Very briefly, here is the outline of the thesis:

[2] For an explicit statement of the Sensitivity Dilemma, see (DeRose 2002). For people embracing the first horn thereof, see, e.g. DeRose (2002), Hawthorne (2004). For champions of the second horn, see e.g. Brown (2010), Gerken (2012), Goldberg (2015), Greenough (2010).

Chapter #1. This chapter clears up some matters concerning epistemic normativity that have been generally ignored in the assertion debate. That is, I argue, there is an important distinction to be drawn between epistemic norms and mere norms with epistemic content. In the light of this, I argue that a knowledge norm for assertion need not imply context sensitivity of either knowledge/knowledge attribution or proper assertion.

Chapter #2. Say that it turns out that the knowledge norm of assertion, in its biconditional form, is perfectly compatible with the shiftiness data. Does that also mean that KNA is correct? The answer, of course, is 'no'. After all, empirical adequacy is shared by several of the competing views on the market. We need further reasons to believe KNA is the correct account. This chapter looks at several extant attempts to provide a rationale for KNA, and finds them wanting.

Chapter #3. I offer an alternative answer to the rationale question: assertion, I argue, is governed by a particular epistemic norm in virtue of serving a particular epistemic function. More precisely, according to the proposed account, a biconditional knowledge norm of assertion drops right out of assertion's epistemic function of generating testimonial knowledge.

A functionalist explanation of the overriding picture proposed in Chapter #1 is put forth. Furthermore, it is argued, if the proposed functionalist picture is correct, we have an argument for non-normative commonality for belief, action and assertion.

I close by looking at a few possible objections to the view defended here, and answering them in turn. First, I answer contextualist worries concerning the denial of knowledge in high stakes scenarios. Second, I consider and reject alternative, truth-centred and justification centred functionalist pictures. Third and last, I argue that, although a variety of epistemic consequentialism, the account defended here can steer clear of the classical problems of this view.

Chapter #4. Recent literature argues that knowledge is not necessary for epistemically proper assertion. The most prominent competing account on the market imposes a weaker, rational credibility norm on assertion (RCNA). Defenders of RCNA argue that (1) theoretical considerations, such as a priori simplicity, speak in favour of RCNA, (2) the weaker norm scores equally well when it comes to accommodating linguistic data and (3) KNA, as opposed to RCNA, has a hard time explaining cases in which assertions on lesser epistemic standings do not render the speakers subject to criticism. This chapter tips the

balance back in favour of knowledge necessity. I argue that: (1) the argument for the a priori simplicity of RCNA does not go through, and KNA scores better when it comes to (2) accommodating linguistic data and (3) explaining how a speaker can be blameless, yet in breach of the norm.

Chapter #5. This chapter looks at two prominent objections to the sufficiency claim involved in the knowledge norm of assertion (KNA-Suff,) due to Jessica Brown and Jennifer Lackey, and argues that they miss their target due to value-theoretic inaccuracies. It is argued that (1) the intuitive need for more than knowledge in Brown's high-stakes contexts does not come from the epistemic norm governing assertion, but from further norms stepping in and raising the bar, and that (2) Lackey's purported quality-driven case against KNA-Suff boils down to a quantitative objection. If that is the case, Lackey's argument will be vulnerable to the same objections as Brown's.

Chapter #6. I argue that several theoretical virtues favour the functionalist account defended here over competing explanations of the shiftiness data. I begin by briefly looking at knowledge sensitivism with an eye towards both empirical adequacy and theoretical virtues, and I find that the invariantist view defended in this thesis wins on all fronts.

Second, I turn to scoring my view against alternative invariantist accounts. I look at Patrick Rysiew's pragmatic warranted assertability move against contextualism, and argue that it fails, due to not generalizing to assertions that do not feature knowledge attributions. Further on, I show that assertion sensitivism is strongly incompatible with the received value-theoretic view regarding the relationship between the axiological and the deontic: one of the two has to go. I argue that the one to go is assertion sensitivism.

Last but not least, I examine KNA-friendly invariantist accounts. According to Tim Williamson and John Turri, what explains the shiftiness intuition is a need for second order knowledge for proper assertability in high stakes situations. I argue that both simplicity and plausibility considerations speak in favour of the functionalist account defended here over their view.

Chapter I.
The Context Sensitivity Dilemma

For the most part,[3] the epistemological literature of the last decade implicitly assumes that the intuitive variability of proper assertion with practical stakes motivates the following sensitivity dilemma: either we embrace a biconditional knowledge norm[4] of assertion, and are forced into holding a view that takes knowledge/knowledge attribution to be sensitive to practical considerations, or we stick to our classical invariantist guns, but then the knowledge norm goes out the window, together with all its theoretical benefits.

As a result of this widespread assumption, we are offered two package deals. Some people defend one form or another of knowledge sensitivism (SK). Contextualism[5] and pragmatic encroachment[6] are the two main incarnations of this view.[7] While the former holds that the relevant contextual determiners lie with the attributor, the latter takes it that it is all about the practical interests of the subject. Both defend KNA.[8]

Note, however, that defending this combination of views is a fairly theoretically costly affair. After all, it requires a radical departure from the historically received view, according to which whether one knows (or 'knows') does not depend on practical considerations.

As such, unsurprisingly, many feel that knowledge sensitivism is too high a theoretical cost to pay for accommodating the data, and give up the knowledge norm in favour of a stakes-sensitive view of proper assertability (assertion sensitivism, or SA for short). According to these philosophers, epistemic propriety of assertion is a shifty affair: it varies with a number of contextual determiners, among which, prominently, practical stakes.

Note, though, that losing KNA is not that great a bargain either; after all, with knowledge as the norm of assertion, we have a very straightforward and elegant way of explaining quite a few otherwise puzzling linguistic data.

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[3] But see Chapter #6 for a few attempts to argue otherwise.

[4] Champions of KNA include Peter Unger (1975), Michael Slote (1979), Keith DeRose (2002), John Hawthorne (2004) John Turri (2011) and most famously Timothy Williamson (1996, 2000).

[5] E.g. Cohen (1998), DeRose (2002).

[6] E.g. Hawthorne (2004), Stanley (2005).

[7] Given its central focus, for the purposes of this thesis, I am setting relativism (e.g. MacFarlane 2005) aside. See Greenough (2011) for discussion.

[8] Stanley's (2008) defense of a certainty norm of assertion makes for a notable exception.

This chapter aims to bring this implicitly assumed dilemma to centre stage and take a step back; it argues that the sensitivity dilemma is a false dilemma, resting on deontic equivocation: the knowledge norm of assertion, it is argued, is perfectly compatible with classical invariantism.

1.1 Bank Cases and the Generality Objection

It looks as though, in high stakes practical contexts, assertability does not come cheap: intuitively, more warrant is required for being in a position to assert. Let us dub this the Shiftiness Intuition.

This phenomenon is hardly a newly arrived guest at the epistemology table;[9] however, popularity wise, the golden age of the Shiftiness Intuition began once being employed to defend contextualism.[10] Epistemic contextualism is a semantic thesis about attributions of knowledge: it holds that the truth conditions of 'knows' are context-dependent. But why think that 'knows' works in this fashion? Here is a pair of famous cases by Keith DeRose (1992: 913):

BANK CASE A. My wife and I are driving home on a Friday afternoon. We plan to stop at the bank on the way home to deposit our pay checks. But as we drive past the bank, we notice that the lines inside are very long, as they often are on Friday afternoons. Although we generally like to deposit our pay checks as soon as possible, it is not especially important in this case that they be deposited right away, so I suggest that we drive straight home and deposit our pay checks on Saturday morning. My wife says, 'Maybe the bank won't be open tomorrow. Lots of banks are closed on Saturdays.' I reply, 'No, I know it'll be open. I was just there two weeks ago on Saturday. It's open until noon.'

BANK CASE B. My wife and I drive past the bank on a Friday afternoon, as in Case A, and notice the long lines. I again suggest that we deposit our pay checks on Saturday morning, explaining that I was at the bank on Saturday morning only two weeks ago and discovered that it was open until noon. But in this case, we have just written a very large and very important check. If our pay checks are not deposited into our checking account before Monday morning, the important check we wrote will bounce, leaving us in a very bad situation. And, of course, the

[9] Austin (1979, 180), for instance, observes that, while in normal contexts the fact that your hat is in the hall seems to be good enough reason for me to say that you are in, when a lot hinges on it, I would be quite reticent to do the same.
[10] E.g. (DeRose 1992, 2002), (Cohen 1986, 1999).

bank is not open on Sunday. My wife reminds me of these facts. She then says, 'Banks do change their hours. Do you know the bank will be open tomorrow?' Remaining as confident as I was before that the bank will be open then, still, I reply, 'Well, no, I don't know. I'd better go in and make sure.'

Assume that the bank will, in fact, be open on Saturday. Still, it feels as though in CASE B, as opposed to CASE A, DeRose is right not to attribute knowledge to himself. [11] Contextualism has a straightforward explanation of this intuition: the truth conditions of knowledge ascribing sentences vary with changes in the relevant contextual parameters.

Now, one notable difficulty for the view is what DeRose himself dubs 'The Generality Objection', that is, the observation that the said shiftiness need not concern knowledge attributions; rather, it seems to equally affect the assertability of the embedded propositions alone. It looks as though the high stakes contexts in which it is very difficult to properly assert 'S knows that p' are also contexts where it feels wrong to assert the simple 'p'. For instance, in the BANK CASE B above, where, intuitively, DeRose can't assert that he knows that the bank will be open, it looks as though it would also be equally wrong for him to flat-out assert 'The bank is open on Saturdays' (DeRose 2002, 177).

In the light of these data, the contextualist leans on the independent plausibility of the knowledge norm of assertion. Roughly, the thought goes as follows: very plausibly, one is in a good enough position to make an epistemically proper assertion that p if and only if one knows that p.[12] If that is the case, however, it follows that the standards for knowledge go hand in hand with the standards for proper assertability. But, the contextualist line goes, standards for proper assertability definitely seem to vary with practical context. Consider, for further illustration, the following knowledge-attribution-free cases:

ASPIRIN-1. You remember having bought aspirin last month. As such, when you head together with your sister towards your place for dinner,

[11] In the said Bank Case, DeRose is not merely abstaining from attributing knowledge to himself; he denies that he knows. See Section #3.3.1 for discussion.

[12] The *locus classicus* for the defense of the necessity claim involved in KNA is Williamson (2000). For support for the sufficiency claim, see Williamson (2005) and Simion (2015). While (Williamson 2000) does not explicitly endorse the sufficiency direction of KNA, there are several passages which afford a sufficiency reading. For instance, notably, Williamson claims that "only knowledge warrants assertion" (2000, 243). Since 'knowledge warrants assertion' is a sufficiency claim, and 'only p' implies p, the claim easily affords a sufficiency reading.

and she lets you know she has a minor headache, you flat out assert: '*Don't worry, I have aspirin at home*'.

ASPIRIN-2. You remember having bought aspirin last month. Your sister's two years old baby is having a fever, and needs an aspirin as soon as possible. Plausibly, were your sister to ask you: 'Do you have aspirin at home, or should we go to the pharmacy?' you would be less inclined to flat out assert that you have aspirin at home. You would rather say something along the lines of: '*Well, let's drop by the pharmacy, just in case*'.

Thus, it looks as though, in high stakes contexts, assertability does not come cheap: intuitively, more warrant is required in ASPIRIN2 than in ASPIRIN1 for being in a position to properly assert that you have aspirin at home. But if KNA is true, i.e. if the standards for knowledge go hand in hand with the standards for proper assertability, the contextualist argues, given that the latter vary with context, so will the former.

1.2 DeRose's Incompatibility Claim

We have seen that the Shiftiness Intuition was taken to force us in one of the following two directions: either we embrace knowledge sensitivism and we get to have KNA, or we stick to our classical invariantist guns, but then KNA goes out the window, together with all its theoretical benefits. Here is DeRose on the matter:

> If the standards for when one is in a position to warrantedly assert that *P* are the same as those that constitute a truth condition for 'I know that *P*,' then if the former vary with context, so do the latter. In short: The knowledge account of assertion together with the context sensitivity of assertability […] yields contextualism about knowledge (2002,187).[13]

As such, DeRose argues, the knowledge account of assertion *demands* a sensitivist account of knowledge:

[13] Note that DeRose's argument goes a bit too fast from KNA and the shiftiness data to contextualism; any variety of pragmatic encroachment will share in the goods here.

> What of the advocate of the knowledge account of assertion who does not accept contextualism? Such a character is in serious trouble. Given invariantism about knowledge, the knowledge account of assertion is an untenable attempt to rest a madly swaying distinction upon a stubbornly fixed foundation. […] The knowledge account of assertion demands a contextualist account of knowledge and is simply incredible without it (2002, 182).

Let us unpack what is claimed here; it looks as though we are offered the following incompatibility claim:

The Incompatibility Claim (IC): Given that proper assertability varies with practical stakes, KNA is incompatible with Classical Invariantism.

Now, crucially, in spite of its initial plausibility, in its present formulation, DeRose's Incompatibility Claim is false. Here is why: note, first that as they stand, the Shiftiness Intuition and IC alike only talk about general propriety of assertability. Crucially, though, everybody in this debate is in the business of providing an *epistemic* norm of assertion, so what matters for them is not just any sort of propriety, but specifically *epistemic* propriety. Unqualified appeals to propriety, then, will not help us settle the case.

Furthermore, our intuitions need not track epistemic propriety. This assumption affords argument. To see this, note that assertion is a type of action. Now, all actions are governed by several general norms in virtue of their being actions as such – prudential and moral norms, for instance. But also, many actions are subject to norms specific to the particular type they belong to: chess moves are governed by norms of chess, driving by traffic norms etc. (henceforth, I will refer to any type specific norm as norm N). Propriety by general norms will not, however, necessarily coincide with propriety by type specific norms. It might be that your act is proper in one sense – say, prudentially – but improper by norm N, or the other way around.

Also, an act may be subject to an all-things-considered evaluation; as such, it might be the case that, even though your act conforms to norm N, it is all-things-considered improper. Requirements according to a particular norm are defeasible: they can be overridden by more stringent requirements stepping in. If I have to move the rook diagonally in order to save my life, my doing so will be all-things-considered proper, as the prudential considerations override the norms of chess. Still, my action is improper according to norm N of chess playing.

In the light of all this, and insofar as we take KNA to amount to an epistemic norm, in its present formulation, DeRose's IC is strictly speaking false: an epistemic knowledge norm of assertion is perfectly compatible with practical sensitivity of permissible assertion, insofar as the permissibility at stake is not epistemic.

1.2.1 The Epistemic Shiftiness Assumption

In order to hold, IC needs be reformulated as follows:

The Incompatibility Claim* (IC*): Given that *epistemic* proper assertability varies with practical stakes, KNA is incompatible with Classical Invariantism.

Note, however, that the mere Shiftiness Intuition in itself fails to motivate IC*; after all, again, the former, as opposed to the latter, only regards general propriety. A further assumption needs to be in place, to complete the rationale behind IC*: the felt variation of propriety needs be epistemic in nature. Let us call this the Epistemic Shiftiness Assumption:

The Epistemic Shiftiness Assumption (ESA): The intuitive variation in propriety of assertion with stakes[14] regards epistemic propriety.

However, as it turns out, ESA is not so readily defensible. To see this, consider the following question: given the normative distinctions mentioned above,[15] how is one to distinguish the requirements of the norm one is interested in – in our case, the epistemic norm – from the requirements of further norms stepping in and overriding it? After all, for all it is being said, it might be that our intuitions mirror all-things-

[14] For now, this discussion is restricted to variability of propriety with practical stakes. For variability with tabled error possibilities, see Section #6.2. For a view taking propriety of assertion to also vary with changes in *epistemic* environments, see Goldberg (2015). For a view that takes a variety of types of contextual determiners to be relevant for permissible assertion, see (Gerken 2012). Space considerations prevent me from discussing these views in detail. Insofar, however, as both Goldberg and Gerken take practical stakes to be among the relevant determiners, their views are relevant to the present discussion.

[15] Jennifer Lackey expresses a similar worry regarding excuse maneuvers brought in defense of KNA: "For now, whenever evidence is adduced that concerns the epistemic authority requisite for proper assertion, it may bear on the norm of assertion or it may bear on these other […] norms. […] [I]t will be extremely difficult, if not impossible, to tell which is being defended (Lackey 2011, 277).

considered propriety;[16] if our intuitions need not be triggered by epistemic propriety, however, it looks as if we will hardly be able to assess the explanatory power of one norm of assertion or another or the plausibility of ESA, by merely looking at our intuitions about cases. More needs to be done: we need to supplement our methodology with a principled way to distinguish the requirements of the epistemic norm we are after from further requirements stepping in.

Now, here is a widely[17] endorsed view about individuating epistemic normative requirements:

The Content Individuation Thesis (CIT): If a norm N affects the amount of epistemic support needed for permissible φ-ing, then N is an epistemic norm.

One can find CIT implicitly assumed in most of the literature discussing the epistemic normativity of belief, assertion or action in the last decade.[18] Furthermore, often, CIT is also explicitly endorsed; take, e.g., the following passages:

> [T]he problem with the agents in the above cases is that it is not *epistemically* appropriate for them to flat-out assert that *p* […]. One reason this is clear is that the criticism of the agents concerns the *grounds* for their assertions (Lackey 2013, 38).

> Assertions are governed by an alethic or an epistemic norm – that is, a norm that specifies that it is appropriate to assert something only if what is asserted is true, or justifiably believed, or certain or known (Maitra 2011, 277).

Note that, if CIT is a viable way of distinguishing between genuinely epistemic norms and norms of different sorts, ESA is true; after all, the variation at stake here is a variation in what the proper degree of warrant for assertion is concerned: a higher degree of warrant seems to be needed in high stakes, but not in low stakes scenarios.

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[16] Plausibly, on most occasions, our intuitions *are* merely tracking all-things-considered propriety. This claim, however, affords separate argument, and is stronger claim the one needed for the argument made here. I will, therefore, set it aside.

[17] For exceptions, see pragmatic warranted assertability moves against contextualism (à la Rysiew (2001), Brown (2006)). See Section # 6.2 for discussion. For explicit doubts about this recipe for individuating epistemic norms, see e.g. Hazlett, McKenna and Pollock (2012).

[18] See e.g. Gerken (2012).

Alas, unless we have good reason to believe epistemic normativity is relevantly special, CIT is false, and therefore will not help with offering support for ESA. Here is, why: take the case of action in general. Recall the chess case: in this particular instance, it looks like my norm N-proper action – that is, refusing to move the rook diagonally – is all-things-considered inappropriate. Crucially, though, rendering the action altogether inappropriate is not the only way in which more stringent requirements can override a norm governing a particular type of action. Consider traffic norms: driving one's car within city bounds will surely be subject to whatever the local traffic regulations have to say about it. Say that the relevant traffic norm forbids one from driving faster than 50 km/h. However, say, for instance, that a terrorist group placed a bomb in centre town and I am the only one able to diffuse it. In order to get there in time, I have to break the traffic norm and drive 70 km/h. Clearly, the latter requirement overrides the traffic norm and renders driving 70 km/h the all-things-considered proper thing to do.

Notice that, in the cases above, additional norms stepping in modify the normative picture in two importantly different ways. First, in the chess case, my norm N-proper action – i.e., refusing to move the rook diagonally - becomes, due to prudential considerations, all-things-considered altogether inappropriate. In contrast, in the case of driving, the standards of propriety are modified: the bomb threat pushes the all-things-considered proper speed up to 70 km/h. In sum, it looks as if overriding norms can:

Override1: Make my token action all-things-considered inappropriate.

Override2: Modify the standards for all-things-considered propriety up or down.

About Override2: notice that the case of driving is hardly isolated. Similar examples can be construed for many types of action, provided that the norms in question regulate *how much of a gradable property* one's action needs to enjoy in order to be permissible. It can be prudentially or morally appropriate to drive faster or slower, to have a better or a worse grade average, to wear a longer or a shorter skirt. Thus, it looks as if, when permissible action requires more or less of a gradable property G, norms regulating that particular type of action can fix the threshold for N-proper performance lower or higher on the G spectrum. Just because a norm is regulating the appropriate speed, it need not be a traffic norm; just because a norm regulates the appropriate length of one's skirt, it need not follow it is a fashion norm.

1.3 Epistemic Norms and Norms with Epistemic Content

To return to our subject matter, assertion is a type of action, and justification is a gradable property. If that is the case, though, unless we have reason to believe that epistemic normativity functions in a different way than other types of normativity in this respect, we should expect norms pertaining to the normativity of action in general, like prudential or moral norms, to be able to override the epistemic norm we are talking about in both ways identified above: either by making one's epistemically proper assertion altogether inappropriate, or by modifying the degree of warrant for all-things-considered proper assertion – like in the case of driving. But, again, if that is the case, CIT is false: just because a norm N affects the amount of epistemic support needed for proper assertion, it need not follow that N is an epistemic norm. It can be, of course, the case that it is; but it can also be the case that what we are dealing with is a norm of a different nature – say, a prudential or moral norm – with epistemic content; that is, modifying the all-things-considered proper degree of epistemic warrant. Thus, we should expect that just because a norm has epistemic content, it need not follow it is an epistemic norm.

Now, recall that we were in the business of checking the plausibility of IC*; that is, the claim according to which KNA is untenable in conjunction with classical invariantism. Also, we have seen that IC* crucially depends on ESA, i.e. the assumption that the felt shiftiness in assertion's propriety is epistemic in nature. Now, crucially, we are missing any reason to believe ESA holds; after all, other types of norms can override the epistemic norm and affect the felt propriety of the target assertion. Furthermore, just because the propriety at stake regards the amount of epistemic warrant, it need not follow that it is epistemic propriety: other types of norms can affect the appropriate amount of epistemic warrant also.

If that is the case, however, we have no reason to believe IC* holds either: insofar as the shiftiness of proper assertability with practical context need not concern epistemic proper assertability, and insofar as KNA is meant as an epistemic norm of assertion, it may be perfectly compatible with Classical Invariantism. After all, if the shiftiness intuition regards, say, the prudential propriety of assertion, it can still be the case that, epistemically, invariantist knowledge is both necessary and sufficient for proper assertion.

To see the plausibility of an explanation of the data along such lines, let us have a quick glance back at the cases. Recall: in the high, but not in the low stakes context, intuitively, it felt inappropriate of DeRose

to say that he knew the bank would be open on Saturday, based on merely having been there two weeks before. Now, in the light of the above distinction between genuine epistemic norms and other non-epistemic norms with epistemic content, let us ask ourselves: what kind of considerations are the ones plausibly generating the impermissibility at stake in BANK CASE B? Is it the case that epistemic concerns of sorts are at work, or rather that it is prudentially unadvisable to make the relevant assertion, since it might result in a fairly risky course of action, with high practical costs attached? It looks as though the more plausible answer is: 'the latter'. Similarly, in the high stakes version of ASPIRIN, it looks as though the reason why I should abstain from making the corresponding assertion is because I would thereby be putting the health of my nephew at risk. Again, this looks like a prudential rather than at epistemic concern.

Chapter #3 below will offer a principled way to individuate epistemic norms that vindicates this thought. For now, at the very least, one thing is clear: we have had a false dilemma on our hands to begin with, viz. the Shiftiness Dilemma. A Classical Invariantist Knowledge Norm of Assertion is perfectly able to explain the data at hand: *epistemically*, knowledge is both necessary and sufficient for proper assertion. However, often enough, the epistemic norm gets overridden by practical, moral etc. concerns, which explain the felt (all-things-considered) impropriety.

1.4 Conclusion

This chapter has identified a widely assumed dilemma when it comes to accounting for the intuitive variability of proper assertion with practical stakes: it is commonly thought that one can either hold that knowledge is the norm of proper assertion and be a sensitivist about knowledge, or abandon KNA in favour of a context sensitive standard for proper assertability in order to remain under a Classical Invariantist umbrella (what I have dubbed the Shiftiness Dilemma). I have argued that the Shiftiness Dilemma is a false dilemma, resting on an unmotivated normative assumption, i.e. the assumption that the felt variation in assertability with stakes is epistemic in nature (ESA). Further on, I have shown how, as soon as we give up this assumption, Classical Invariantism is perfectly compatible with a knowledge norm of assertion.

Of course, for all I've argued so far, the explanation involving overriding, KNA friendly is just one out of many available ways to

account for the data at hand. One separate question, of course, regards the independent plausibility of KNA, as well as the available rationale to believe KNA is true to begin with. This is precisely what the next chapter is all about.

Chapter II.
Rationales for the Knowledge Norm

Say that it turns out that knowledge is, indeed, the norm of assertion; will that fully meet our concern with the relevant norm? The answer is 'no'. One crucial question still remains to be answered, i.e., the rationale question (RC): why is assertion governed by a knowledge norm in the first place?

As it turns out, with very few exceptions, RC is not addressed by contributors to the debate; little[19] has been done to explore the rationale behind one epistemic norm or another, KNA included. However, in the absence of a rationale, it is not clear why a different norm might not have come to be governing the speech act of assertion. Since it is rather implausible that this might have occurred, the need for a rationale is pressing in its own right, independently of finding a satisfactory account of what the correct norm is.

This chapter looks at three proposed rationales for KNA - crucially, all targeting the necessity direction thereof - and argues that they fail to do the intended work. The first two I dub inheritance arguments;[20] according to these proposals, assertion inherits the knowledge norm from some other relevantly related entity; belief and action are the usual suspects. In contrast, according to the last proposal this chapter examines, the knowledge norm is constitutive of assertion itself, rather than derived from a related entity. That is, the speech act itself is defined by the very fact that all instances thereof are governed by KNA.

2.1 Inheritance #1: Belief

It looks as though there's a clear sense in which you should only assert things you actually believe; after all, we criticize each other all the time for doing otherwise: 'You don't believe that yourself!', or 'Why would you say such a thing? Do you really believe it to be true?' are fairly common ways to challenge assertions. Several philosophers take this to suggest that, if there is such a thing as a particular epistemic standard governing belief, it will also get inherited by the speech act of assertion.

I identify two broad types of defence: first, there are people who believe that, in a relevant way, belief and assertion are essentially the

[19] Exceptions include Kent Bach (2008), Igor Douven (2006), Frank Hindriks (2007), Sandy Goldberg (2009), Tim Wiliamson (2000).
[20] I borrow this terminology from Jessica Brown (2012).

same kind of beast, only manifested in different environments ("the belief-assertion parallel", notably defended in Adler (2002)). Importantly, these philosophers also take this metaphysical parallelism to have import in the normative realm.

Secondly, I move to deontic transmission arguments. According to people like Kent Back and Frank Hindriks, belief and assertion are governed by one and the same epistemic norm in virtue of the fact that one inherits it from the other.

2.1.1 Normative Correspondence and the Belief-Assertion Parallel

One very widely spread assumption in recent literature on epistemic norms is that the 'belief-assertion parallel' (henceforth BAP) has a special kind of normative import. That is, several prominent philosophers (e.g. Williamson (2000), Douven (2006), Sosa (2010)) employ the thesis that, roughly put, belief stands to assertion like inner to outer, to argue from the epistemic norm governing one to the epistemic norm governing the other. It is assumed, then, that metaphysical parallelism licenses norm correspondence. Now, say that turns out to be true. And say that we have strong independent motivation to believe that knowledge is the norm of belief – that is, that one must: believe p only if one knows that p. After all, the claim has a lot going for it: among other things, it does seem right to say that only knowledgeable belief is good belief. Or, even more plausibly, that ignorant belief is epistemically defective. If this turns out to be right, in conjunction with BAP, it delivers a pretty solid rationale for the necessity claim involved in KNA.[21]

This section questions this way to go about deriving KNA. To this effect, I first argue that, in its most plausible formulation, the belief-assertion parallel lacks any normative import. Further on, I turn to an alternative reading of the BAP in an attempt to shed serious doubts on its plausibility and normative strength.

To begin with, I want to get one worry out of the way: one might be tempted to object to BAP on metaphysical grounds; after all, belief is a state while assertion is an action. This line, however, will not concern us here, since I take it not to constitute an insurmountable difficulty for the champion of BAP1; she could, for instance, replace belief for judgement, or belief-formation.[22]

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[21] I take it to be a contingent matter of fact that the BAP has traditionally been employed to only defend the necessity direction of KNA. However, given that this is the case, I discuss it accordingly.

[22] E.g. (Frege 1918, 22).

Let us get down to business; in Tim Williamson's reading, the belief assertion parallel amounts to the claim that:

BAP: Believing *p* stands to asserting *p* as the inner stands to the outer (2000, 255-56).

Furthermore, Williamson (2000, 255-256) takes BAP to warrant the following normative claim:

Norm Correspondence (NC): If belief (assertion) is governed by norm N, then assertion (belief) is governed by norm N also.[23]

To check the plausibility of this claim, let us ask ourselves how one should read BAP in the first place. After all, the fact that some x stands to some y like inner to outer affords two possible readings: first, it could be that x and y are species of the same genus, active in different environments. Alternatively, one might be a species of the other: x but an inner manifestation of y, or the other way around. I will start with the most plausible reading, which also seems to be the one readily suggested by Williamson's formulation:

BAP1: Belief stands to assertion like inner φ-ing to outer φ-ing,

where phi is to be replaced by whatever it is that belief and assertion share, in spite of their differences in environment. Now, what phi stands for is of little importance for us here, but just for illustrative purposes, let us go along with Sosa (2010) and call it affirmation. As such, we get:

BAP1*: Belief stands to assertion like inner affirmation to outer affirmation.

Note that, at least at first glance, this formulation looks fairly plausible: intuitively, belief does seem to be, in some sense, the inner counterpart of assertion.

Note, however, that BAP1 fails to offer the desired kind of normative import, i.e., norm correspondence. That is, one cannot use BAP1 together with one's preferred account of the normativity of either

[23] Given BAP, and having offered extensive argument for a knowledge norm of assertion, Williamson argues for a knowledge norm of belief: "It is plausible [...] that occurrently believing *p* stands to asserting *p* as the inner stands to the outer. If so, the knowledge rule for assertion corresponds to the norm that one should believe *p* only if one knows *p* (2000, 255-256)"

belief or assertion to derive the relevant corresponding norm. After all, on this reading, belief and assertion are but species belonging to the same type. The fact that one is governed by a particular norm tells us precious little about what norm governs the other. To see this, consider waltzing and tango dancing; though they are both species of dancing, it does not follow that if N is a norm for waltzing, then N is also a norm for tango dancing. Similarly, on BAP1, one cannot argue from N being the norm for belief to N being the norm of assertion. On this reading, metaphysical parallelism does not warrant norm correspondence.

On a first approximation, what seems to be needed is that the genus is itself governed by the relevant norm; if N is a norm for dancing in general, it will be inherited by all of its species. If that is the case, what is needed here is that N is a norm governing the genus, i.e., in our example, affirmation, and thus gets inherited by both belief and assertion.

Crucially though, even so, the desired normative claim will still fail to come through. To see why, it will be useful to first turn to the alternative possible reading of the BAP and its purported normative import: on this reading, the claim would amount to taking belief and assertion to be such that one is a species of the other, which triggers norm transfer. Given that what we are interested in here is deriving the norm of assertion from the norm of belief, the formulation in question goes along the following lines:[24]

BAP2: Assertion is a species of belief, to wit, vocalized belief.

The thought would be, then, that norm correspondence readily drops out of this way of reading BAP, since whatever the norm for belief, it will govern all species thereof, including the vocalized one, i.e. assertion.

At first glance, BAP2 seems to do the required normative trick. Think about dancing again: it looks as though, if there is a norm requiring one to wear light shoes for all dancing, one must, thereby, also wear light shoes for waltzing.

Alas, this normative import claim does not withstand closer value-theoretic scrutiny either: norm transfer need not imply norm correspondence. To see why, note that the relevant norm for the type of shoe required for waltzing might be more demanding than the one governing dancing in general. This should be fairly easy to see: after all, what distinguishes waltzing from just any dancing is the fact that it is

[24] People like Jonathan Adler (2002) and Igor Douven (2006) defend a formulation that takes belief to be a species of assertion - subvocalized assertion or assertion to oneself. The argument that follows applies, *mutatis mutandis*, to this formulation also.

governed by some distinctive norms on top of the ones governing the type it belongs to. In virtue of this, it can be that the relevant norm for waltzing is *stronger* than the one for dancing in general: and, as a matter of fact, waltz shoes are not just any light shoes, but medium heel, pointy, cross strapped light shoes.

If that is the case, though, again, correspondence need not follow from BAP2 either. That is, just as in the case of waltz shoes, it can be that the epistemic requirement on the species is stronger than that on the genus. BAP2 does nothing to exclude a normative picture whereby assertion is only epistemically permissible if knowledgeable, while belief is governed by a less demanding norm. If that is the case, however, we will not be able to tell, just by looking at the norm governing belief, what norm governs assertion.

Of course, correspondence may follow in the following trivial way: given that we are talking about a necessity claim, if assertion will be governed by the stronger norm, the weaker condition governing belief will also be necessary for proper assertion. This result, however, is hardly interesting: surely, for instance, defenders of a knowledge norm of assertion would not want to say that they agree with defenders of a truth norm, just because the former entails the latter. What we care about here – and what the literature is concerning itself with – is not merely identifying *a* necessary condition on epistemically proper assertion, but identifying the strongest such necessary condition.

All in all, we don't seem to have much in the way of motivation for believing that normative correspondence is true. I say 'not much' rather than 'any' because, for all has been said here, there remains room for correspondence insofar as what is defended is a maximally strong norm for both assertion and belief. That is, BAP in all readings will do the intended work unaffected by the argument made by this paper, if what is at stake is a certainty norm, for instance. It is easy to see, then, that the normative requirement will merely be transferred from type to species unaffected.

Note, though, a few things: first, again – depending, of course, on how the relevant notion of certainty is spelled out - many people will most likely fail to feel the attraction of defending such a demanding norm for either assertion or belief.[25] Second, more importantly for present purposes, note that this still robs BAP of its advertised normative strength: after all, on this picture, BAP will only work in conjunction with a good defence of the relevant epistemic norm for whichever of the two – assertion or belief – is taken to be the genus.

[25] Importantly, Williamson defends a knowledge norm where knowledge is understood to imply epistemic probability 1.

And third, even if we set all this aside, on closer inspection, there is reason to doubt that even this pale claim to normative relevance stands. Here is why: note that BAP2, taken at face value, suffers from some degree of metaphysical awkwardness. It is, after all, a bit weird to claim that a speech act is a species of a mental state. What needs be the case, then, in order to avoid such aberration, is that we read BAP2 non-literally, as making a restricted claim of the form:

BAP2*: Assertion is, in a relevant way, a species of belief, to wit, vocalized belief.

What BAP2* attempts to do is get rid of the metaphysical awkwardness at issue in the original formulation. The claim is that, for all we care, that is, in all respects that are relevant for the present discussion, assertion is a species of belief. Not in the sense that it is, itself, a mental state rather than a speech act, but in the sense that these considerations do not matter for present purposes.

Note, though, that this restriction robs BAP of even its last bit of normative flavour: after all, what this restriction amounts to saying is that belief and assertion share some features, and others not. Again, however, just as in the case of them being species of the same genus, the features they don't have in common can make all the normative difference.

One last thing still needs to be discussed: recall what was said at the end of section #2.1 about affirmation: I was suggesting there that, even if we take assertion and belief to be species of the same genus, i.e. affirmation, and we find that a particular norm, call it N, governs the genus, norm correspondence will still fail to hold. Now we are in a position to easily see why: first, it can still be the case that, although both assertion and belief inherit N from affirmation, one of them is governed by a stronger norm N+. Second, even on the assumption that what is at stake is a maximally strong norm, the normative import we get is less than satisfactory; again, normative correspondence fails to obtain. Recall that the thought was that what we wanted was to be able, in virtue of BAP, to come to deduce the norm of assertion from knowing the norm of belief. On the picture we are left with, however, this will not work. After all, if we buy into BAP1, and come to discover that the norm of belief is certainty, we will still not be able to ascertain whether that particular norm is inherited from the genus – affirmation – as is, with the result that we may expect it to govern assertion also, or whether affirmation is governed by a weaker normative requirement, in which case there is little we can ascertain about assertion.

To sum up: we have looked at two possible readings of the belief-assertion parallel and argued that the BAP does not have the normative import it is often thought to have. On the one plausible, metaphysically unproblematic reading, on which belief and assertion are related to one another as inner to outer, nothing of normative interest follows from BAP. We then explored the readily available thought that, in order to make sense of its employment in support of one normative account or another, BAP needs to be spelled out as making a (metaphysically weird) genus-species claim. However, it's not at all clear that the price is dialectically worth paying given that, as it turns out, even on this reading, BAP fails to deliver.

2.1.2 Deontic Transmission

If norm commonality does not follow from the belief-assertion parallel, that is, from metaphysical relations of sorts between the two, perhaps the target norm can be plausibly inherited through some variety of normative relations. Stipulating normative dependence is one way that has been exploited in the literature; this is the route pursued by Kent Bach (2008) and Frank Hindriks (2007). Roughly, the idea is that a knowledge norm for assertion (KNA) can be derived from taking assertion to be the linguistic expression of belief, which gives rise to a belief rule on assertion, and a knowledge rule on belief. This idea has been developed in more detail by Hindriks. He starts from the following idea:

(1) To assert that *p* is to utter a sentence that means that *p* and thereby expresses the belief that *p*.

Hindriks goes on to argue that, in situations of normal trust, which obtain unless it is permissible to lie, assertion is governed by a sincerity rule to the effect that one must express an attitude only if one has it. This gives us:

(2) In situations of normal trust, one must: express the belief that *p* only if one believes that *p*.

(1) and (2) imply

(3) In situations of normal trust, one must: assert that *p* only if one believes that *p*.

Furthermore, Hindriks takes (3) to ground norm inheritance; that is, he takes it to be the case that, if (3) holds, and say:

(4) One must only believe what one knows (the knowledge norm of belief, KNB),

it follows that

(5) In situations of normal trust, one must only assert what one knows (the knowledge norm of assertion, KNA).

In sum, the thought behind the Bach/Hindriks normative dependence line is simple and elegant: since it is plausible that there is a belief norm on assertion, whatever the norm for belief is, it will get inherited by assertion.

Now, plausible as this might sound, there are, as a matter of fact, two important ways in which normative inheritance might fail to go through, in spite of normative dependence; first, there is a quantitative problem: transmission might fail. That is, it might be that, somewhere down the road, the norm in question gets affected – for instance, weakened or strengthened – by further normative requirements stepping in and, as a result, it fails to be inherited in its initial shape.

Second, there is a qualitative danger, pertaining to the type of norm we are talking about. That is, given that what we are after is an epistemic norm, we want to make sure the requirement that gets inherited strictly pertains to epistemic normativity.

Now, concerning the latter, doubts have been expressed in several places in the literature (e.g. Ball (2014), Kelp and Simion (2016)) regarding the validity of the Bach/Hindriks derivation, worrying that an equivocation on 'must' is at play in the argument. Roughly, the thought is that the Bach/Hindriks line attempts to derive an epistemic must – the epistemic norm of assertion in (5) – from a moral must governing 'normal trust' situations ((3)).

Even so, it may yet be possible to rescue Hindriks's argument. Why exactly should a moral sincerity rule be governing assertion in the first place? Why should we find it morally objectionable to make insincere assertions? One plausible answer is that insincere assertions are prone to induce false beliefs in others and that's something bad. But now notice that false beliefs are in the first instance an *epistemic* bad. One might think, then, that the moral sincerity rule is ultimately grounded in an epistemic sincerity rule, which, in turn, exists in order to minimize the epistemic bad of false belief.

What I will argue next, however, is that even if we charitably interpret the Bach/Hindriks line to keep with sheer epistemic obligation from beginning till end, their conclusion still fails to follow.

Here is why: according to the Bach-Hindriks line,

(1) In normal trust situations, it is permissible to assert p only if you believe p.
(2) It is permissible to believe p only if you know p,
(3) Therefore, in normal trust situations, it is permissible to assert p only if you know p.

It is easy to see that, since the first premise features belief, while the second stipulates necessary conditions for *permissible* belief, and since belief does not imply permissible belief, the Bach-Hindriks Line fails: deontic 'possible' does not work like this.[26] There will be worlds where you believe impermissibly, but you still do, therefore you can permissibly assert. Obligation just does not transmit like the Bach/Hindriks line needs it to transmit. The lesson to take home, then, is the following: you might be criticisable for your beliefs, for breaking the norm of belief (say, for believing non-knowledgeably). However, insofar as you keep with the norm of assertion – in our case, the sincerity norm requiring you not to say things you don't believe yourself - your assertions will be criticism-proof.

One way to save the Bach/Hindriks argument that readily comes to mind, then, is to modify the second premise as to feature permissible belief:

(1) In normal trust situations, it is permissible to assert p only if you permissibly believe p.
(2) It is permissible to believe p only if you know p,
(3) Therefore, in normal trust situations, it is permissible to assert p only if you know p.

However, while this refurbished version of the Bach/Hindriks argument is, indeed, valid, it is not clear what in the Bach/Hindriks story can be taken to offer support to premise (1). It is plausible that normal trust situations are such that you should not assert things you don't believe yourself, i.e., as Bach and Hindriks would put it, you

[26] Note that, although the structure of the Bach/Hindriks line closely resembles the so-called Deontic Transmission principle (DT), the appearance is misleading; here is DT: If one ought to X in order to Y and Z in order to X, then one ought to Z in order to Y. Again, in virtue of moving from discussing belief in the first premise to permissible belief in the second, the Bach/Hindriks line fails to instantiate DT.

should not express a belief that you don't have. However, it is not clear why trust situations should also imply the stronger requirement of only expressing permissible beliefs. After all, plausibly, and according to the Bach/Hindriks line itself, assertion is a mere expression of belief, not of permissible belief.[27]

2.2 Inheritance #2: Action

We have seen that arguments counting on describing some sort of normative inheritance for assertion from belief suffer from value theoretic inaccuracies: metaphysical parallelism was shown to fail to support normative correspondence, while doubts were shed on the trustworthiness of deontic transmission in the case of stipulated normative dependence between the two.

Now, here is one plausible claim: likely, our epistemic capacities are mainly meant to help us act well; as such, the kinds of things we believe and assert will, all things being equal, be the kinds of considerations we act upon. Here is, for instance, Robin McKenna on this issue: "[…] beliefs are the sorts of things that lead to actions and assertions. What each of us believes influences what we act on and assert, and in turn influences what those around us believe, act on, and assert (McKenna, Forthcoming).

In the light of this, another popular inheritance argument in the literature takes the norm of assertion to follow from pragmatic considerations concerning what, at the end of the day, both belief and assertion are, plausibly, *for*: storing/transmitting actionable information. As such, it seems fairly plausible that, whatever the norm for action will turn out to be, belief and assertion alike will stand to inherit it.

Note, though, that this argument very closely resembles the Bach-Hindriks line, with the exception that the source of inheritance is taken to be an external one. That is, people defending this line want to get normative dependence between action on one hand, and belief and assertion on the other, to deliver normative inheritance. But, of course, one worry that readily arises is: if this line is but an external incarnation of the Bach-Hindriks argument, will it not suffer from the same transmission problems?

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[27] But see Chapter #3 for an argument along similar lines, which supports the claim that one should only assert what one permissibly believes (i.e., knows) by arguing that 1. the function of assertion is generating permissible (i.e. knowledgeable) belief in the hearer, and 2) generating permissible belief in the hearer requires, in the vast majority of cases, permissible belief on the part of the speaker.

Fortunately, the answer is 'no'. And here is why. Recall that the Bach/Hindriks line turned out to be invalid. The problem was that, while the permissibility claim for assertion featured mere belief, knowledge was only necessary for *permissible* belief. Since the former does not imply the latter, the derivation failed. Now consider, in contrast:

(1) It is permissible to believe/assert p only if it is permissible to act on p.
(2) It is permissible to act on p only if you know p.
(3) Therefore it is permissible to believe/assert p only if you know p.

This derivation, of course, is fine, transmission-wise: the first premise stipulates necessary conditions for permissible assertion/belief that pertain to *permissible* action. Further on, the second premise also stipulates necessary conditions for *permissible* action. As such, in this case, normative transmission is successful.[28]

Here is this my worry concerning this line of argument, though; consider:

I. One must: dance only to songs one knows.

II. One must: jump in the lake only if one knows how to swim.

III. One must: only assert that p if one knows that p.

It seems pretty obvious that III, in contrast to I and II, is a genuinely epistemic norm. What can we say about I and II? Well, for what is worth, they surely are norms guiding particular types of action; furthermore, they specify a particular amount of epistemic support needed for permissible action of these particular types. What type of permissibility are we talking about, however? Plausibly, aesthetic permissibility in the case of I (if there is such a norm as I to begin with, it is plausibly there to insure people don't fail really badly on the dance floor) and prudential in the case of II (after all, it is in view of the desirability of staying alive that the above norm holds).

[28] Also, DT is, in this case, instantiated. Here is how the argument goes if we make DT explicit: (1) One ought to be in a position to permissibly act on p in order to permissibly believe/assert that p. (2) One ought to know in order to be in a position to permissibly act on p. (3) If one ought to X in order to Y and Z in order to X, then one ought to Z in order to Y (DT). (4)Therefore, one ought to know in order to permissibly assert (from (1), (2) and (3)).

Recall what we have seen in Chapter #1: the content individuation thesis (CIT) for epistemic norms is false: just because a norm regulating action features epistemic content – that is, just because it stipulates a particular amount of warrant needed for permissible φ-ing – it need not follow it is an epistemic norm. Again, this should hardly be surprising; after all, the same is the case everywhere in the normative landscape: just because a norm regulates the appropriate length of one's skirt, it need not follow it is a fashion norm – it can be, for instance, a norm pertaining to religious practice; just because a norm regulates the appropriate speed, it need not follow it is a traffic norm, rather than, for instance, a moral norm. Several types of norms can regulate the degree of a gradable property needed for permissible action in a given context.

If that is the case, though, that is, if the 'must' at stake in (2) need not be an epistemic must, the above derivation fails to go through. The defender of external inheritance needs to narrow down the permissibility at stake in her argument such that it is not at danger of equivocating on the relevant notion of 'must.'

Given that what we are interested in are epistemic norms governing assertion and belief – as opposed to, say, prudential, aesthetic or moral norms – we want to make sure that we are employing an epistemic must all through the argument. To this effect, what we will need, now that we have seen that the widely assumed CIT does not work, is a new, principled way to individuate epistemic norms for action from their prudential, aesthetic etc. counterparts. Absent such an account, the external inheritance derivation does not go through.

Now, given that her argument will only work in conjunction with an individuation proposal for epistemic norms for action, I take it that it is on the shoulders of the defender of external inheritance commonality to put forth an account that does not assume CIT but serves her purposes well.

In the Chapter #3, though, I propose one way to go about epistemic norm individuation that draws on epistemic functions which, if true, will give us further reason to believe normative inheritance from belief and/or action to assertion is implausible.

For now, let us take stock: we have seen that extant inheritance arguments, which aim to offer a rationale for the norm of assertion, fail. First, as it turns out, metaphysical parallelism (i.e., the belief-assertion parallel) does not support normative correspondence. Second, we have looked at people trying to derive normative inheritance from normative dependence. The internal variety thereof was shown to not go through due to transmission failure. The external incarnation, while successfully

transmitting, was shown to be in danger of normative equivocation, absent a principled way to individuate epistemic norms.

Now, let us ask ourselves the following question: If whatever the norm of assertion is, it does not plausibly get inherited from the most obvious candidates – i.e. belief and action -, what is there still left to explain the source of its normative strength?

Tim Williamson has a metaphysical answer to this question: the very nature of the speech act.

2.3 The Constitutivity Story: A Negative Result

According to Tim Williamson (1996, 2000), KNA is a constitutive rule of assertion just like rules of games are constitutive, that is, each and every instance of this speech act is governed by KNA. In fact, according to him, KNA is the *unique* constitutive rule of assertion and assertion is the *only speech act* whose unique constitutive rule is KNA (Williamson 2000). If that is the case, of course, what we seem to get is a pretty strong rationale for KNA: after all, its normative strength will be sourced in the very nature of the speech act itself.

Now, while KNA is fairly popular in the literature, the constitutivity claim fails to enjoy the same widespread support as many take it to be implausibly strong. Herman Cappelen (2011), for instance, notably worries about both its plausibility and the reasons we are given to believe it to be true.[29] Here is Cappelen:

[29] Aside for the line discussed here, Cappelen offers three more arguments against the constitutivity claim. The first two concern issues pertaining to criticisability and blame attribution related to the practice of assertion. Since I look very closely at these issues when I discuss the case pro and con the KNA necessity claim (Chapter #4 below), I skip this discussion for now.

The last argument by Cappelen pertains to his doubts that there is such a thing as a speech act of assertion to begin with, and it concerns the scarcity of assertion attribution in everyday talk. In the interest of relevance, this thesis only focuses on anti-constitutivity arguments that employ considerations pertaining to normativity of speech acts rather than speech-act theory. As such, I set this argument aside also.

Another speech-act theoretic argument against the constitutivity claim I am setting aside is due to Peter Pagin (2016). In a nutshell, Pagin worries that our everyday competence in employing the speech-act of assertion, together with the widespread disagreement regarding just what norm governs it in the literature, give us reason to distrust normative accounts of assertion. After all, Pagin argues, if assertion is essentially defined by the norm governing it, and we don't seem to know what the latter is, how is it that we are so successful at employing this speech act? To stick to the games analogy, we don't seem to be able to play a particular game without knowing its rules.

I take it, though, *contra* Pagin, that it is not the case that knowing the constitutive norm(s) for φ-ing is necessary for engaging in φ-ing. Take language, for example: many, if not most of us, surely come to know the rules of grammar of our

> According to [Williamson], there is a norm, N, such that it is impossible for there to be an assertion that is not governed by N. […] Even though Williamson defends a view about the essence of assertion, none of his arguments are modal. The arguments Williamson uses at best show that we as a matter of fact follow the knowledge rule; at best they show that, as a matter of fact, the knowledge rule is the default rule for evaluating utterances of declarative sentences. Williamson develops no argument to support the claim that we couldn't have performed the act in question governed by another default rule.

Furthermore, Cappelen argues that, given that conceivability is a guide to possibility, and that since "we can conceive of paradigmatic assertions as governed by norms other than N, we have evidence against N-theories".

In order to make his case, Cappelen asks us to consider a common speech act, call it E: Mia saying that Mandy forgot to pay her cell phone bill last week. Now, ask yourself, for instance: could Mia perform E if the default assumption was, for instance, that she should only assert E if she believed E? The intuition reported by Cappelen here is that the answer is 'yes'. He further asks us to consider, in contrast, the case of games: "Could Mia have played tennis, if serves were thrown by hand, without a racket, and no ball could be hit by a player unless she had a foot on one of the lines …?" Hardly; it looks as though Mia would definitely be playing quite a different game. If that is the case, Cappelen argues, it looks as though we have strong reason to doubt that KNA is constitutive of assertion in the way rules of games are constitutive: it looks as though one can continue to assert under the stipulation of a different norm being in play, while, at the same time, this does not seem to be the case for games.

A couple of things about the Cappelen line, however: first, note that one important notion at work in the cases above is the one of a 'default assumption'. Mia is supposed to be able to assert although 'the default assumption' is that she can only assert p if she believes p. What is not clear, however – since Cappelen does not say much about it – is what exactly we are supposed to make of the relation between φ-ing

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own mother tongue way after having become speakers of the respective language. Of course, Pagin could object to this and argue that we will have had implicit knowledge of the respective rules of grammar all along. Note, though, that the same can be plausibly thought about the norms governing various speech acts. On this view, what philosophers are trying to do is merely make the norms at stake explicit.

being constitutively governed by norm N – the issue we are interested in here – and N being 'the default assumption' when φ-ing. Presumably, Cappelen takes the two to be somehow equivalent, since otherwise his cases would fail to be relevant to the issue under discussion. Note, though, that this is hardly a trivial thesis, and therefore in need of independent defence. After all, the default assumption in many places on the planet is still, unfortunately, that women are inferior to men. Surely, though, in spite of this, we would not want to say that it is all right – by any norm – for them to be treated as such in those societies. Of course, it might be that what makes the difference has to do with the contrast between constitutive and non-constitutive norms. However, it is surely on Cappelen's shoulders to argue as much; until he does, the cases will not do much against Williamson.

Second, more importantly, note that Cappelen's cases are disanalogous in two crucial respects: on one hand, the stipulated alternative norm for assertion in Mia's case is fairly closely related to (i.e., implied by) KNA. As opposed to this, the proposed departure from the actual norms for tennis playing is quite significant. To see how this plays a crucial role, consider a case in which the proposed alternative norm for assertion is: assert that p only if you are wondering whether p. Plausibly, the speech act performed would fail to qualify as an assertion. Or, the other way around, consider a case in which the alternative norm for tennis is: Only use a red racket! Surely, the game at stake would still qualify as tennis.[30]

On the other hand, note that Williamson's constitutivity thesis comes with a uniqueness thesis: as such, the proper analogy would be with a game that is governed by one and only one norm. In this case, however, arguably, Cappelen's argument would fail to go through: changing the norm would change the game that is being played.

More about this, however, in the next section, which aims to argue against the plausibility of Williamson's uniqueness-constitutivity claim.[31]

2.3.1 Constitutive Norms and Conditions of Engagement

Let's begin by following Williamson in distinguishing two questions that one can ask about activities that are governed by constitutive

[30] Williamson would likely disagree. See below for a response.

[31] The argument to follow only targets the constitutivity claim in conjunction with the uniqueness claim. As such, it does not strictly speaking show that KNA could not be one constitutive rule of assertion among others. For doubts about the force of such a picture to provide a rationale for KNA, though, see below.

rules.[32] The first is what the rules governing the activity actually are, the second concerns the conditions that people must satisfy to engage in the activity. While Williamson's main concern is with the first of these two questions and, in particular, with mounting a case for *KNA*, he does make two points about the second question. First, "constitutive rules do not lay down necessary conditions for performing the constituted act." [2000: 240] That is to say, one can break a constitutive rule and still continue to engage in the constituted activity. In the case of draughts, for instance, one can cheat without thereby ceasing to play draughts. Williamson even grants that one may break constitutive rules often. Second, "some sensitivity to the difference – in both oneself and others – between conforming to the rule and breaking it presumably is a necessary condition of playing the game, speaking the language, or performing the speech act." [Ibid.] In the case of draughts, for instance, if one is completely insensitive to the fact that players who move pieces diagonally conform with the rules and players who move them vertically don't, then one won't be playing draughts, even if one happens to move pieces only diagonally. This section grants Williamson both of these claims.[33]

That said, it is worth noting that while Williamson does take the above condition to be a necessary condition for engaging in an activity that is governed by constitutive rules, he does not claim that it is also sufficient. It is thus compatible with what Williamson has to say about the conditions for engaging in activities that are governed by constitutive rules that there are further necessary conditions, besides the one he himself countenances. This section will argue for one such condition. The point is that, if the argument made here is successful, we will have identified one necessary condition on unique constitutive rules which KNA fails to meet and, as such, we have reason to believe KNA is not a constitutive rule of assertion.

Finally, note that while the issues the two questions touch upon are indeed different, they are not unrelated. To see this consider once more Williamson's proposed condition according to which engaging in an activity governed by a constitutive rule requires some sensitivity to the difference between conforming to a constitutive rule and breaking

[32] For the purposes of this dissertation, I use rules and norms interchangeably.

[33] For the record, the second claim seems implausibly strong: it looks as though one can engage in an activity A such that r is a constitutive rule of A even though one is entirely insensitive to the difference between conforming to r and breaking it. For instance, one may speak English even though one is entirely unaware of the rule that requires one to add 's'/'es' to present tense verbs in the third person singular. That said, there is a true claim in the vicinity of Williamson's second claim: one cannot be insensitive to the difference between conforming and breaking too many of the rules constitutive of an activity. Since, however, this issue is of little consequence for the purposes of this section, I set it aside.

it. Now (i) let *A* be an arbitrary activity (putatively) governed by constitutive rules, (ii) let *r* be an arbitrary (putative) rule governing *A* and (iii) suppose that one can engage in *A* even though one is not at all sensitive to the difference between conforming with *r* and breaking *r*. From Williamson's condition in conjunction with (i) and (ii) it follows that engaging in *A* requires some sensitivity to the difference between conforming to *r* and breaking it. However, this evidently contradicts (iii). This means that, for any *A* such that (iii) holds for *A*, it follows from Williamson's necessary condition on engaging in activities that are governed by constitutive rules that either (i) is false and *A* is not governed by constitutive rules at all, or else (ii) is false and *r* is not a constitutive rule of *A*. In this way, then, the correct answer to the question of what the necessary and sufficient conditions on engaging in activities governed by constitutive rules are may have implications for the correct answer to the question as to what the constitutive rules governing a certain activity are. The issues the two question raise, whilst different, are thus related.

I agree with Williamson that conforming with a constitutive rule is not a necessary condition for engaging in the constituted activity and that it may even be possible to break constitutive rules frequently.

Even so, there are limits to how persistently and systematically one can break the constitutive rules of an activity and still engage in the constituted activity. To see why, suppose you are playing a game of draughts with a friend. It may be that your friend cheats, perhaps even often. But now suppose you are attempting to play a game of draughts with a friend only to find that he persistently and systematically moves the pieces horizontally and vertically rather than diagonally. In this case, your friend is not really playing draughts. Alternatively, suppose you wanted to strike up a conversation in English with him. It may be that he breaks the rules of English and perhaps he does so frequently. But now consider a case in which he persistently and systematically utters only strings of the phoneme 'ka'. When you ask him how he is doing he responds: 'Kakaka', when you ask him whether he has gone mad his answer is: 'Kaka kakaka ka', and so on. If he persists in this behaviour too systematically, he is not speaking English.

These considerations seem to motivate the following condition on engaging in activities that are constituted by constitutive rules:[34]

[34] Ishani Maitra (2011) adduces an argument that can at least be reconstructed as proceeding along similar lines. Here is the condition on engaging in activities that are constituted by rules she proposes: 'If r is a constitutive rule of some activity A, then one cannot violate r flagrantly without ceasing to engage in A.' According to Maitra, a violation is flagrant "if it is intentional and sufficiently marked" (2011: 282). However, it looks as though one can violate KNA flagrantly and still count as asserting. While I am sympathetic to something in the vicinity of the Maitra line, I don't think that

Engagement Condition: If some activity *A* is constituted by a set of constitutive rules, *R*, then one cannot violate too many members of *R* too systematically without ceasing to engage in *A*.

Two comments by way of clarification: First, we may want to allow for variation in what counts as violating too many members of a set of constitutive rules and what counts as violating them too systematically. In the draughts case, your friend is not playing even though he violates only one rule, albeit with near maximum systematicity. (Note that maximum systematicity is not required. If your friend were to move the pieces vertically and horizontally nearly all of the time, he'd still not be playing.) In contrast, in the English case, your friend violates many rules with a very high degree of systematicity. Here, we may want to allow that systematically violating a single rule does not mean that one ceases to speak English. If your friend were to systematically fail to add an 's' to present tense verbs in the third person singular, we may want to allow that he still speaks English.

Second, Engagement Condition is plausible even when your friend breaks the rules non-deliberately or otherwise blamelessly, when he tries to follow the rules or when he thinks he is following the rules. Suppose, in the draughts case, your friend is misinformed about the rules of draughts, say because he was told that pieces move horizontally and vertically. When, in this case, he systematically moves the pieces in these ways, he will systematically break the rules of draughts whilst doing so non-deliberately and blamelessly, whilst trying to follow them and thinking that he is following them. Even so, he is not playing draughts. The same goes for the case of speaking English. Even if your friend were not to blame, etc. for violating nearly all the rules of English with near maximum systematicity, say because he had been told that 'ka' is the only phoneme in English, he would still not be speaking English.

If Engagement Condition is plausible, then so is the following:

Maitra's condition really is a necessary condition for engaging in activities constituted by rules. That is to say, it does not look as though engaging in activities that are constituted by rules really does not admit of flagrant violations of these constitutive rules. To see why, consider the case of English. It is clear that one may flagrantly violate a constitutive rule of English, without thereby ceasing to speak English. For instance, were I to say 'Maitra's argument just don't work', I would have flagrantly violated the rule that requires one to add 's'/'es' to present tense verbs in the third person singular. While I would be speaking bad English, I would not thereby cease to speak English altogether.

Engagement Condition'. If activity, *A*, is constituted by only a single constitutive rule, *r*, and if one violates *r* with near maximum systematicity, then one does not engage in *A*.

Consider, for instance, a card game, call it 'Ace of Spades' in which the only constitutive rule is that one must continue to turn over cards from a standard deck until one turns over the ace of spades. If you violate this rule with near maximum systematicity, say because you regularly stop turning over cards when and only when you turn over the three of hearts, you are not playing Ace of Spades.

It is easy to see that we can run an argument parallel to the one featuring Williamson's proposed condition above to establish a relation between Engagement Condition' and the issue of which constitutive rules, if any, govern a given activity. Again, (i*) let *A* be an arbitrary activity (putatively) governed by constitutive rules, (ii*) let *r* be an arbitrary rule that (putatively) is the only constitutive rule governing *A*. Suppose, furthermore, (iii*) that one can engage in *A* even though one violates *r* with near maximum systematicity. From Engagement Condition' in conjunction with (i*) and (ii*) it follows that engaging in *A* requires not breaking *r* with near maximum systematicity. However, this evidently contradicts (iii*). This means that if for any *A* such that (iii*) holds for *A*, it follows from Engagement Condition' that either (i*) is false and *A* is not governed by constitutive rules at all, or else (ii*) is false and *r* is not the only constitutive rule governing *A*. Crucially, either way, it cannot be the case that *r* is the only constitutive rule governing *A*. As a result, for any *A*, establishing (iii*) it will be sufficient to show that the relevant *r* is not the only constitutive rule governing *A*.

The next section argues that instances of (iii*) are true of KNA. As a result, KNA cannot be the only constitutive rule governing assertion.

2.3.2 The Uniqueness-Constitutivity Claim

Consider the following case:

COMPULSIVE LIAR. Bob is a compulsive liar: Bob is strongly disposed—perhaps even hard-wired—to assert *p* only when he believes *p* to be false.

At least the following is plausible about Bob concerning *Case 2*:

Possible Assertion. It is possible for Bob to assert a wide range of propositions.

I take Possible Assertion to be eminently plausible. However, for those in doubt, there is independent reason to think that it is true. After all, Bob's relevant speech acts may have a number of hallmark features of assertions, including the following: they present their contents as true, they furnish others with a prima facie entitlement to believe their contents, and we will hold Bob accountable for the truth of their contents.

Of course, the presence of these features is not put forth here as infallible reason to believe that Possible Assertion is true; rather, it is merely taken to offer some support to its plausibility. On the other hand, note that not much more than this can be offered at this point, without already presupposing a view about the nature of assertion. On the upside, however, my opponent will also have difficulties in arguing that Possible Assertion is false without such an assumption. Furthermore, given the overwhelming intuitive plausibility of Possible Assertion, I take it that it is on the shoulders of its foes to come up with a solid error theoretic way to dismiss this intuition. Given this, I will, in what follows, rely on Possible Assertion.

Now, let us move on and assume, as we may, that Bob happens to be not only rather chatty but also an exceptionally reliable cognitive agent who lives in an exceptionally hospitable epistemic environment with the result that nearly all of his beliefs qualify as knowledge. We then get:

Systematic Counter-Knowledge. Bob makes assertions that, with near maximum systematicity, are false and run counter to what Bob knows.

However, it is easy to see that Engagement Condition', together with Possible Assertion and Systematic Counter-Knowledge deliver the result that KNA cannot be the unique constitutive norm of assertion. Here is how: By Systematic Counter-Knowledge, Bob makes assertions that, with near maximum systematicity, run counter to what Bob knows. Therefore, Bob makes assertions that, with near maximum systematicity, violate KNA. We thus have our relevant instance of (iii*) for assertion and KNA. Since establishing an instance of (iii*) will be enough to show the falsity of the thesis that *r* is the only constitutive rule governing *A* for any putative constitutive rule *r* and any *A*, it follows that KNA is not the unique constitutive norm of assertion.

Here is one line of defence that could be pursued at this point: maybe what Williamson is best understood as advancing is not a thesis

about the constitutive rules of assertion, but a thesis about the constitutive rules of the practice of making assertions in the population. According to this view, while systematically breaking KNA by one member of the population would not amount to her failing to assert, if the entire population would follow suit, the practice would soon disappear. After all, if the practice of assertion were to be constituted by KNA and KNA only, we would expect that if an entire population of speakers were to systematically violate KNA, the practice of assertion would at some point be discontinued. After all, if assertion stops being a trustworthy epistemic vehicle, it is far from clear why we should continue engaging in this practice; the uniqueness constitutivity thesis is confirmed about the practice of assertion.

Unfortunately, there is reason to believe that the uniqueness constitutivity claim is false even when understood as a thesis about the practice of making assertions. Let's grant the objector (i) that practices of engaging in activities can be constituted by rules and (ii) that an important necessary condition on operating such a practice is:

Engagement Condition*. If a population's practice, *P*, of engaging in an activity, *A*, is constituted by a set of constitutive rules, *R*, and if too many members of the population violate too many members of *R* too systematically, then the population does not operate *P*.

If Engagement Condition* is plausible, then so is:

Engagement Condition**. If a population's practice, *P*, of engaging in a rule governed activity, *A*, is constituted by only a single constitutive rule, *r*, and if nearly all members of the population violate *r* with near maximum systematicity, then the population does not operate *P*.

The uniqueness-constitutivity claim understood as a thesis about the practice of making assertions and Engagement Condition** do indeed entail:

No Practice. If too many members of a population of speakers violate KNA with near maximum systematicity, then the population does not operate a practice of making assertions.

What's not so clear is that No Practice is really correct. To see why not, consider:

Compulsive Liars. phi is a population of agents such that (i) all its members only ever say what they believe to be false, (ii) this is common knowledge and, consequently, (iii) whenever a member of the population says that *p*, members of the audience will infer and thereupon come to believe that not-*p*.

It seems that the following is plausible about Compulsive Liars:

Possible Assertion*. It is possible for the members of phi to assert a wide range propositions.

Furthermore, it looks as though this is because there is little reason to discontinue the practice of assertion in such a population, since, together with the common knowledge concerning the peculiarities of the said population, it constitutes a pretty reliable epistemic vehicle. Now, let us assume, as we may, that the members of phi happen to be not only very chatty but also otherwise exceptionally reliable cognitive agents who live in an exceptionally hospitable epistemic environment with the result that nearly all of their beliefs qualify as knowledge. We then get:

Systematic Counter-Knowledge*. The members of phi make assertions that, with near maximum systematicity, are false and run counter to what they know.

It is easy to see that the previous argument, with Engagement Condition** in place of Engagement Condition' and Systematic Counter-Knowledge* in place of Systematic Counter-Knowledge, will serve to show that *No Practice* is incompatible with the uniqueness-constitutivity claim.

Here is one final possible objection I'd like to consider. Doesn't Williamson offer an account of constitutive rules according to which constitutive rules are essential to the constituted act in the sense that "necessarily, the rule governs every performance of the act" (Williamson 2000, 239)? And doesn't KNA come out to be a constitutive rule on this account?

By way of response, note that while Williamson does claim that the above is a necessary condition on constitutive rules, he once again does not claim that it is also sufficient. Note, furthermore, that Williamson will do well not to strengthen this necessary condition into a sufficient condition. After all, moral and practical norms also govern every performance of a given act with necessity. However, we take it that it would be rather implausible to say that moral and practical

norms qualify as constitutive rules of say, moves in draughts, utterances in English or assertions.[35] Williamson's claim is thus only plausible if taken to be a necessary condition on constitutive rules. As a result, it is compatible with further necessary conditions on constitutive rules as well as necessary conditions on what it takes to engage in acts constituted by constitutive rules. In particular, it is compatible with Engagement Condition and Engagement Condition'. Since we have seen these conditions are independently plausible, the prospects of blocking the argument by appeal to the necessity claim are also dim.

2.3.3 Force

Recall that this discussion of Williamson's view was meant to check whether it could provide a satisfactory answer to the question of rationale for KNA, i.e. an answer to the question of why KNA should govern assertion in the first place. We have seen that there is reason to believe that the Williamson uniqueness-constitutivity claim is false. Even so, we may think that this is because it is too strong. After all, maybe Williamson's constitutivity claim is correct and his uniqueness claim mistaken as there are more constitutive norms of assertion. Would constitutivity alone not be enough to serve as a rationale for KNA? Think of games again: why should one not move a rook diagonally when playing chess? Because that's just how the game is played: it is constitutive of chess that, among other rules, one is supposed to not move the rook diagonally.

Note, however, first, that it is far from clear that, once we have some proposals for further constitutive norms of assertion on the table, the argument made here will not generalize. After all, what we would then get would come in the shape of a conjunctive constitutive norm of assertion of which KNA would be one conjunct. At that point, all we need for the argument to generalize is to show that the uniqueness-constitutivity claim fails for the conjunctive norm, along similar lines as above – i.e., by showing that one can engage in assertion while systematically breaking the conjunctive norm.

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[35] In fact, it seems that one very plausible way of distinguishing between constitutive rules and other norms that govern acts necessarily, such as moral and practical norms, is that constitutive rules come with conditions on what it takes to engage in the constituted act like the one Williamson mentions and the one defended above. While constitutive rules are like moral and practical norms in that they are not contingent, they differ from the latter in that one cannot engage in a constituted act unless, for instance, one is sensitive to what counts as conforming to the constitutive rule and breaking it. In contrast, in the case of moral and practical norms, such insensitivity does not prevent one from engaging in the act.

What's more, to my knowledge, no one has defended a view of assertion according to which KNA is one constitutive rule among others. It looks as though, then, for the time being, it is on the shoulders of those who want to pursue this route to put forth some candidates for further constitutive rules of assertion and to show that the argument made here does not generalize to the resulting proposal.

Furthermore, even so, that is, even if a successful proposal is put forth, there is reason to doubt the force of the resulting rationale. To see this, note that, importantly, constitutivity without uniqueness looses much of its normative strength. That is because it looks as though, while for a game governed by one and only one constitutive norm, the game lives and dies with the norm, that is less plausibly the case when it comes to non-unique constitutive norms. Let's first take chess as an example again. Why should chess be governed by one set of rules rather than another? For instance, why should chess be governed by a rule according to which the pawn can move two squares forward if it has not yet been moved, but only one square if it has already been moved (R1), rather than by a rule according to which it can always only move one square (R2)? Note that games evolve over time: some rules get lost in the process, new ones come into play. It is, of course, plausible to think that we are, as a matter of fact, playing a different game if many rules, or one of the central rules are lost over time. However, it looks somewhat implausible to believe that, say, just because, for user-friendliness considerations, R1 comes to replace R2 in time, we thereby stopped playing chess altogether. Even more implausibly, consider the case of languages: as Williamson himself acknowledges (2000, 239) natural languages gradually change their rules over time without losing their identity.

At the same time, it seems also implausible that, in the case of norms of assertion, KNA could, at any point, disappear or be replaced by a different norm. In sum, supposing that assertion really is governed by KNA, it is somewhat less than plausible to think that we might end up using a speech act that is governed by a different rule instead at any point. For instance, it is rather implausible that we might as well have end up using a speech act governed by the following rule of assertion:

The Wondering Norm of Assertion. One must: assert *p* only if one wonders whether p.

Williamson (2000, 239) acknowledges as much, that is, he agrees that rules of games and languages change over time, but argues that what he is interested in is not the ordinary sense of game, language or assertion, for that matter, but rather a technical one, for which it is

the case that "a rule will count as constitutive of an act only if it is essential to that act: necessarily, the rule governs every performance of the act". He motivates this by fruitfulness considerations:

> [I]n a technical sense of 'language' which the philosophy of language has found fruitful, the semantic, syntactic, and phonetic rules of a language are essential to it […]. The richer ordinary sense of 'language' introduces needless complications. Linguistic conventions and the consequent possibility of linguistic change can then be accommodated at a different point in the theory: a population which at one time has the convention of speaking a language L may later change to a convention of speaking a distinct language L*, constituted by slightly different rules" (2000, 239).

Similarly, Williamson wants a technical sense of assertion, which avoids the issue of normative change:

> Likewise, in the present technical sense of 'speech act', the rules of a speech act are essential to it. A population which at one time has the convention of using a certain device to perform a speech act A may later change to a convention of using that device to perform a distinct speech act A*, governed by slightly different rules (2000, 239).

Two things about this: first, it is not clear how fruitfulness considerations are supposed to work in this case. Say, for instance, that the speech act governed, among other constitutive norms, by KNA, and called assertion – in its technical sense – disappeared about 6 centuries ago, and, due to simplicity considerations, was replaced by assertion*, governed by a justified true belief norm (JTBNA). After all, Gettier cases are so weird and rare, that imposing a stronger epistemic constraint than JTB seems like a waste of resources. One first question that arises, if that is the case is: why should we care about philosophizing about assertion rather than about assertion*? Secondly, what about a defender of JTBNA, bringing linguistic data forward to support his account? He will, presumably, have to be satisfied with a Williamsonian response along the following lines: 'Strictly speaking, assertion is governed by KNA, therefore I am right and you are wrong. It's just that it disappeared 6 centuries ago, and was replaced by this different speech act, which your linguistic data makes reference to. ' It would, I submit, be rather surprising if the JTBNA fellow will rest content with this reply. And, last but not least, note that Williamson himself adduces

quite a lot of linguistic data in support of KNA, which suggests that he takes intuitions about what is 'ordinarily' taken to be an assertoric act seriously.

As such, all in all, it looks as though the defender of the Williamsonian account faces the following dilemma at this point: she can retreat to merely defending a technical sense of assertion, but then (1) she can't avail herself of (at least some) of the linguistic data Williamson puts forth in support of KNA, and (2) it is not clear why we should care about the epistemic norm governing Williamsonian assertion rather than assertion. Alternatively, she can abandon the mere technical sense, but then the constitutivity claim is not left with much in the way of force to offer a rationale for KNA.[36]

2.4 Conclusion

This chapter looked at several extant attempts to provide a rationale for the knowledge norm of assertion. First, the belief-assertion parallel was shown to lack the advertised normative strength to ground norm correspondence. Second, the claim that assertion inherits the norm of belief in virtue of being an expression thereof turned out to rest on an invalid derivation. Third, the inheritance argument from the norm for action was proven suspicious of deontic equivocation.

Last but not least, I have looked at the potential of Tim Williamson's constitutivity claim of delivering a good rationale for KNA, and tried to cast doubt on both its plausibility and its force.

[36] Alternatively, champions of the Williamson line might maintain that the analogy between rules of assertion and rules of games does not extend to the rationale question. Note, however, that, in that case, Williamsonians will not only shoulder the burden of offering a satisfactory, independent answer to the rationale question. In addition, they will also need to offer good reason why the analogy between norms of assertion and games does not extent to just the point where it becomes potentially problematic for them.

Chapter III
A Function First Rationale

So far, this dissertation has come with some good and some bad news. On the bright side, as it turns out, we were wrong all along: the shiftiness data are not forcing us into a sensitivity dilemma. To the contrary, Classical Invariantism is perfectly compatible with a knowledge norm of assertion. As such, we are free to rip the nice theoretical fruit on both sides.

Alas, though, as it turns out, the rationale question, that is, the question as to why we should think assertion is governed by a knowledge norm in the first place, does not seem to afford an easy answer.

Now, arguably, several competing accounts share in the goods when it comes to empirical adequacy, to some extent or another. If that is the case, in the end, it is to be expected that what is going to decide between competing views are theoretical virtues, such as, crucially, independent plausibility. An answer to the rationale question, then, might make all the difference. This chapter is attempting to offer just that.

3.1 What Assertion is Good for

Recall that, as early as in Chapter #1, we have distinguished between epistemic norms and norms with epistemic content. That is, we have seen that, just because a norm regulates the appropriate amount of epistemic support for proper φ-ing, it need not follow it is an epistemic norm. Now, one problem that still remains is the following: if this distinction is correct, how is one to distinguish the requirements pertaining to norms of the former sort from the requirements pertaining to norms of the latter sort? How is one to know when epistemic normativity proper is the one triggering the relevant intuitions of permissibility, rather than, say, prudential normativity?

3.1.1 Association Typing

Here is a pretty straightforward – and value-theoretically innocent - way to go about it: go by the type of good the target norm is associated with! Prudential norms will be associated with prudential goods, moral norms will be associated with moral goods, etc. In the same spirit, we

should expect epistemic norms to come in a package with epistemic goods.

Think again about my driving towards the city centre to diffuse the bomb: the moral norm there has traffic-related content, it regulates the appropriate speed to 70 km/h. This, however, in no way makes it a traffic norm; this is easy to see, given that it is associated with the moral good of saving hundreds of lives, rather than with safely getting to your destination, which is the good commonly associated with traffic norms. Similarly, prudential norms can have epistemic content; take, for instance, the norm: 'Do not jump in the lake unless you know how to swim'. What makes this a prudential constraint rather than an epistemic one is the good associated with it, which is life preservation. We get, therefore:

The Value Individuation Thesis (VIT): Norms of type X are associated with goods of type X.

Crucially, notice that the above proposal about how to go about distinguishing genuinely epistemic requirements from other types thereof is not only innocent from a value-theoretic perspective, but also, pretty much, the received view in value theory concerning the relation between the axiological and the deontic. [37] That is because the *association* claim between norms and goals of the same type does not imply any direction of explanation, and thus any substantial value-theoretic commitment. It holds on both the most notable views regarding the relationship of the good to the deontic. The teleologist explains the 'ought' in terms of the 'good'; he will say that the norm of type X is there to guide us in reaching the goal of type X. The deontologist reverses the order of explanation: according to 'Fitting Attitude' accounts of value, the goal of type X is only valuable because the norm of type X gives us reasons to favour it. In either case, the mere *association* claim holds.[38]

3.1.2 Etiology

In the light of the previous discussion regarding the type-association between norms and goods, I will be asking the obvious question: what is assertion good for (epistemically)? The aim is to develop a function-first account of the normativity of assertion, in conjunction with a

[37] For discussion, see, for instance, Schroeder (2012).
[38] I will return to the issue in section #3.2.3, where I discuss possible objections to a consequentialist reading of VIT.

general account of etiological functions and their normative import. At the heart of this account is the thesis that assertion has an etiological epistemic function that gives rise to an epistemic norm.

Here is the normative picture proposed by this paper: in traits, artefacts and actions alike, functions generate norms. There is such a thing as a properly functioning heart, a properly functioning can opener and a proper way to engage in sexual intercourse in order to serve the function of reproduction. We should expect, then, that if there is such a thing as a proper assertion, it will somehow associated with the function it serves. It would be useful, then, given VIT, and given that what we are after is the epistemic norm of assertion, to begin by identifying the epistemic function thereof. To this effect, in what follows, I will be employing an etiological account of functions. [39]

On the etiological theory of functions, functions turn on histories that explain why the item exists or operates the way it does. Take my heart; plausibly, tokens of the type pumped blood in my ancestors. This was beneficial for my ancestors' survival, which explains why tokens of the type continued to exist. As a result, my heart acquired the etiological function (henceforth also e-function)[40] of pumping blood. Acquiring an etiological function is a success story: traits, artefacts and actions get etiological functions of a particular type by producing the relevant type of benefit. My heart acquired a biological etiological function by generating biological benefit. Through a positive feedback mechanism – the heart pumped blood, which kept the organism alive, which, in turn, insured the continuous existence of the heart - our hearts acquired the etiological function of pumping blood.

Now, one question that arises concerns how much history is needed for function acquisition. After all, surely, not all functional items follow the model of the heart: there will be cases where a requirement of selection over generations for function acquisition will seem

[39] Defended by people like David J. Buller (1998), Ruth Millikan (1984), Karen Neander (1991), Peter Godfrey-Smith (1994) and, last but not least, Larry Wright (1973). The etiological theory of functions is, by far, the most widely endorsed view in the literature. Its main competitor is the 'systemic' theory of functions, notably defended in (Cummins 1975). Systemic functions describe how something works or operates—what it does—as a part of a larger system (Cummins 1975). Functions, in this sense, are the causal role capacities of parts that contribute to some capacity of the containing system. Systemic functions are widely believed to lack normative import, which is what explains, to a large extent, both the popularity of the competing, etiological account and why the latter is thought to be much better suited for applications to normative domains like epistemology.

[40] For application of the etiological account of functions to the normativity of belief, see e.g. (Millikan 1984) and (Graham 2012). For a knowledge-first incarnation thereof, see (Simion In Progress).

implausibly strong (Sosa 1993).[41] The paradigmatic case is that of beneficial macro-mutations, also known as hopeful monsters (Graham 2014, 30). Most mutations are harmful (think of extreme birth defects); once in a while, though, a happy accident happens: someone is born with an almost entirely new trait or organ, very different in kind from its ancestral trait, which actually benefits the recipient. Since they are mutations, they don't have an evolutionary history; they are "first generation" traits. Still, many biologists would say that they have functions.

In response to this worry, Graham (2014) goes into detail about what the etiological historical constraint consists in. According to him, while etiology does require some history, it does not require an awful lot of it; there are several ways to cash out the etiological requirement that do not presuppose directional selection, i.e. selection over generations. A trait can also acquire a particular function by on going, maintenance selection, or through a learning process, or even by the metabolic activity of the organism itself. What it all amounts to, eventually, is explaining the existence/continuous existence of a trait through a through a longer or shorter history of positive feedback:

> Functions arise from consequence etiologies, etiologies that explain why something exists or continues to exist in terms of its consequences, because of a feedback mechanism that takes consequences as input and causes or sustains the item as output (Graham 2014, 35).

Here is, then, on a first approximation, what it takes for a trait to have an etiological function of a particular type:

E-Function: A token of type T has the e-function of producing effect E in system S iff (1) tokens of T produced E in the past, (2) producing E benefitted S/S's ancestors and (3) producing E's having benefitted S's ancestors contributes to the explanation of why T exists in S.[42]

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[41] Take Davidson's Swampman, for instance (1987, 443). Swampman comes into existence as a result of a lightning hitting a swamp and strangely rearranging gas molecules into the exact duplicate of some ordinary person. Now, according to Graham, justified beliefs are beliefs formed via cognitive processes that have the function of reliably producing true beliefs; since function acquisition requires history, and since Swampman's processes lack any, it would seem as though, on Graham´s account of justification, he cannot have justified beliefs. However, intuitively, at least after acquiring the necessary concepts, Swampman´s belief that he is sitting in a swamp seems perfectly justified (Sosa 1993).

[42] I adapted this definition from the ones on offer in Buller (1998) and Kelp (Forthcoming). The account departs in a crucial way from Millikan (1984) in that it drops the requirement for selection over generations.

Before moving on, one more important thing to be discussed is the typing of the relevant e-functions; after all, functions can be of different sorts: there are biological functions, aesthetic functions, social functions, etc. The account defended here departs from the way in which the e-functionalist picture has been traditionally applied to epistemological matters (and outside biology in general) by people like Graham and Millikan in one crucial way: Graham and Millikan take biological benefit to correspond to the acquisition of all types of e-functions. However, this way to apply the etiological account to normative domains outside biology quickly runs into trouble with the corresponding normative claims: In a nutshell, if biological positive feedback is taken to be essential for the acquisition of any type of function, since a trait cannot be properly functioning unless it has a function to begin with, it would look as though proper functioning of any type is depends on a (history of) biological positive feedback. But this does not seem right: to see why, consider, for instance, e-functions acquisitioned via a learning process. It does not seem right to say that whether I am tying my shoelaces properly depends on whether it was ever beneficial to me to tie them up. It is easy to imagine scenarios where that is not the case, which, however, will do little to affect whether I'm properly tying up my shoelaces. Since I have argued this in detail in several places,[43] though, and since this issue is only of marginal relevance to our purposes, I will not go more into detail about this here. [44] I will come back to this matter in Section #3.2.4 below, where I answer a closely related objection to my account.

For now, it is important to keep in mind that, in contrast to the Graham/Millikan view, the account defended here takes functions to be typed by the corresponding benefit. As such, if a trait produces a benefit of type B in a system, the function thereby acquired will be a function of

[43] E.g. (Simion 2016).

[44] The problem, roughly, is that biological benefit and any other type of benefit - call it benefit of type B - can come apart, they need not be instantiated at the same time, even if they normally are. However, if we have a biological benefit requirement on functions of type B, since norms are taken to drop out of the corresponding functions, we will have a biological benefit requirement of the norm of type B being met. In cases where the two types of benefit will come apart, that will give the wrong result: intuitively, propriety by norm B will co-vary with benefit of type B rather than with biological benefit. To see why, think of Swampman again; say that none of the true beliefs he ever acquires in the swamp benefit him biologically, since they result in a terrible depression; rather, he would have been better off not believing any truths about his horrible environment. Still, after acquiring the relevant concepts, he seems perfectly justified in believing he is sitting in a swamp. In contrast, if, say Swampman engages in wishful thinking and thereby forms a bunch of beliefs about him sitting in a heavenly garden, no matter how much this benefits him biologically, he would still not end up being epistemically justified in so believing. For more discussion, see Simion (2016).

type B. If it is biological benefit that is at stake in function acquisition, what we get is a biological function. On this account, the heart's function to pump blood is a biological function in virtue of the fact that the produced benefit is also biological – i.e., survival. The function of music is an aesthetic function in virtue of the fact that the produced benefit is an aesthetic benefit. And so on. Now, of course, aesthetic benefit might, and often will, also result in biological benefit. This, however, in no way renders the function at stake a biological function. What is important to keep in mind is that the benefit that is *essential* to aesthetic function acquisition is the aesthetic one. The fact that biological benefit is also associated with the latter is a mere contingent matter of fact. Here is, then, the full etiological account to be employed throughout this dissertation:

E-Function: A token of type T has the e-function of type B of producing effect E in system S iff (1) tokens of T produced E in the past, (2) producing E resulted in benefit of type B in S/S's ancestors and (3) producing E's having B-benefitted S's ancestors contributes to the explanation of why T exists in S.

Now, with the full account in play, note that the etiological account is an account of functions as purposes: by being selected for it, our hearts have acquired the purpose of pumping blood in our organisms (Graham 2012, 449). Reaching that purpose – i.e., successfully pumping blood – will amount to function fulfilment. But purposes will also come with associated norms prescribing the right way to proceed in order to reliably reach the corresponding purpose. Because its function contributes to the explanation of its very existence, the trait in question *ought* to perform in a way that is associated with likely function fulfilment. Now, according to the etiological theory of functions, this is but the way in which the trait functioned back in the day when it acquired its function. Your heart will pump blood in normal conditions, i.e., conditions similar to those in which it was selected, when functioning normally, that is, when functioning in the way in which it was functioning when it was selected for its beneficial effects. Plausibly, in normal conditions, a normally functioning heart will fulfil its function of pumping blood in your system by beating. According to the etiological theory, then, normal functioning is proper functioning: a heart functions in the way it should (i.e., by the norm) when it functions in the way it did back in the day when it acquired its function: when it beats.

Note, then, that there are two ways a functional device might go right, and two ways it may go wrong. The unhappy cases are: breach of

the norm, i.e., malfunction (in the case of the heart, not beating) and failure to reach the corresponding purpose, i.e. failure to fulfill its function (not pumping blood) (Graham 2012, 449). The happy scenarios are, of course, proper functioning (beating) and function fulfillment (pumping blood).

Crucially, failure/success in one respect need not imply failure/success in the other. A trait can be malfunctioning – thus, in breach of the norm – and still fulfil its function (i.e., reach its aim), and the other way around: proper functioning need not imply function fulfilment. To see this, think of a situation where a surgeon takes the heart out of your chest, places it in a vat full of nutrients for a short while and plugs it to a pipe circuit filled with orange juice. Your heart, of course, will fail to fulfil its function of pumping blood under these circumstances; it will, as a matter of fact, be pumping orange juice. But this does not make it into a malfunctioning heart; to see this, compare it to a heart that has stopped pumping blood because it has been stabbed by a dagger. When functioning normally – whether in normal conditions or not – your heart will function properly, i.e. it will meet the norm constitutively associated with the purpose of pumping blood. It will work the way it is supposed to work, where the right way of working is partly constituted by fulfilling its function in normal conditions.

Also, not only need proper functioning not imply function fulfilment, but the other direction of the entailment need not hold either. After all, your dagger-stabbed heart can fulfil its function in spite of being malfunctioning, through some lucky circumstance, say, a blood circulation triggering magnetic field of sorts being in place.

Let us take stock: the etiological theory of functions aims to give a respectable naturalistic gloss to otherwise suspicious entities like norms and purposes: on this account, norms drop right out of functions, which, in turn, explain why the trait in question still exists. A trait's 'purpose' is identified with function fulfilment, while the associated norm corresponds to normal functioning. Your heart 'aims' at pumping blood because successfully reaching this aim contributes to its continuous existence. Also, your heart 'ought' to beat, because that is the way in which it fulfilled its function back at the point of function acquisition, and, as such, in normal conditions, if it beats, it reliably reaches its aim to pump blood.

It turns out, then, that the e-functionalist picture constitutes itself in a fairly straightforward norm-identification machinery; here is how: first, what we need is to take a look at the relevant function plausibly served by the trait/artefact/action in question. Once the function is identified, the question we need to ask ourselves is: how did

the trait/artefact/action plausibly fulfil its function at the moment of function acquisition? The answer to this question will give us normal functioning which, on the etiological account, corresponds to proper functioning; therefore, the answer to this question delivers the content of the norm we are after.

Furthermore, on this picture, we also get an easy way to identify the type of norm at stake, compatible with the Value Individuation Thesis: norms will be typed by the corresponding functions, which, in turn, are typed by the produced benefit. The norm 'hearts ought to beat' is a biological norm in virtue of the fact that it serves a biological function – pumping blood – which, in turn, produces a biological benefit.

3.1.3 A Function-First Account of Assertion

To see how this works in practice, let us return to assertion: our actions too can, and most – hopefully! - will serve etiological functions, which, again, will come with associated norms.

Now, here is one plausible thought: if there's such a thing as an epistemic norm for assertion out there in the first place, it is likely there to ensure that assertion delivers the epistemic goods we are using it for. Now, what epistemic goods is assertion meant to deliver?

Although not essentially – I can, say, make assertions in a diary, which are usually not intended to affect any audience in any way –, characteristically, assertions will aim at generating testimonial knowledge in the audience. Plausibly, this is the main epistemic function of assertion (see, e.g., (Goldberg 2015), (Kelp Forthcoming), (Reynolds 2002), (Turri In press)). Due to our physical and cognitive limitations, a lot of the knowledge we have is testimonial; thus, assertion is one of our main epistemic vehicles. Now, of course, one could wonder whether all knowledge is on a par in this respect; after all, some items thereof seem entirely useless (e.g. about the number of blades of grass on my lawn). Perhaps, then, it is more plausible to think that the epistemic function of assertion is generating interesting knowledge. For the purposes of this paper, I will take any such restriction on the relevant epistemic goal as read.

Just like hearts were selected for their reliability in generating biological benefit, I submit, the speech act of assertion has been selected for its reliability in generating epistemic benefit, i.e. testimonial knowledge. As such, our assertoric practice acquired the epistemic etiological function of generating testimonial knowledge in hearers. Because it generated testimonial knowledge in our ancestors, it

enabled them to survive – find out about the whereabouts of dangerous predators, find food and so on – and reproduce, thereby replicating the same practice with the same function in their descendants. As such, the fact that assertion generates testimonial knowledge in hearers explains the continuous existence of the practice. Dan Sperber puts this point succinctly: "From the point of view of receivers, communication, and testimony in particular, is beneficial only to the extent that it is a source of genuine […] information" (2001, 404). However, if the practice stops being beneficial to the hearers, it will plausibly be discontinued. Here is, also, Peter Graham on the issue:

> Speakers and hearers both need some reason (motive) to participate. Speakers, presumably, benefit in some way by affecting hearers. If hearers receive no benefit from being so affected, they will probably stop responding in the desired way. So unless hearers get something out of accepting reports, they will not accept them. And if they will not accept them, speakers will not benefit by making them. Then they will not get made. Hearer benefits (partly) explain speaker production.

Just like your heart's pumping blood keeps you alive which, in turn, contributes to the explanation of the continuous existence of the heart, the function of assertion is a stabilizing one, for it "encourages speakers to keep using the device and hearers to keep responding to it with the same (with a stable) response" (Millikan 2005, 94).

Now, recall that functions of a particular type come with associated norms of the corresponding type, which regulate the correct procedure to follow in order to reliably reach them. My heart will reliably pump blood in my system when in normal conditions, i.e. conditions similar to those of function acquisition, when functioning normally, i.e. in the way in which it did when it was selected for pumping blood. Given its biological etiological function, then, my heart will count as functioning properly – i.e., by the biological norm - when functioning normally, i.e. when it functions in the way it did back when it acquired its biological e-function. A biologically proper heart, therefore, will pump blood in my system in normal conditions by beating.

Similarly, the speech-act of assertion will reliably generate testimonial knowledge in hearers in normal conditions, i.e., conditions similar to those in which it was selected, when functioning normally, that is, when functioning in the way in which it was functioning when it was selected for its beneficial epistemic effects. When functioning

normally, the speech act of assertion will fulfil the epistemic norm constitutively associated with its epistemic e-function of reliably generating testimonial knowledge; it will work the way it is supposed to work, where the right way of working is partly constituted by reliably delivering the epistemic goods in normal conditions. Thus, an epistemically proper assertion will be one that, in normal conditions, generates knowledge in the hearer in the way it did back when it acquired its epistemic function.

The question to ask, then, if we want to know the content of the epistemic norm we are after is: how did assertion fulfil its function of generating knowledge in hearers at the moment of function acquisition?

I submit that the overwhelmingly plausible answer is: by being knowledgeable. And here are some reasons that, in my view, leave room for very little doubt that this is so: first, on most if not all accounts of testimony in the literature,[45] in the vast majority of cases, the speaker needs to know in order to be able to generate knowledge in the hearer. Furthermore, knowledge is all the speaker needs to this effect when it comes to her epistemic standing vis-à-vis p.[46]

Also, exceptions to this rule describe extremely unusual scenarios,[47] which renders them highly unlikely to affect the argument from testimony to the knowledge norm in any way. After all, if the function of assertion is generating testimonial knowledge, and in the vast majority of the cases knowledge on the part of the speaker is both needed and enough for generating testimonial knowledge in the hearer, it makes sense to have a knowledge norm governing assertion. To see this, consider driving: norms regulating speed limit within city bounds are presumably there to make it so that we arrive safely at our destination. Surely, though, driving 50 km/h within city bounds is not *always* the ideal speed; there are instances when, for instance, overtaking at 80 km/h will avoid a major accident. However, presumably, the reason why the norm says 'Drive at most 50 km/h

[45] See Lackey (2008) for a nice overview.

[46] Williamson (2000, 256) makes a similar point, although he does not pursue this line any further: "Although there are special cases in which someone comes to know p by hearing someone who does not know p assert p […], the normal procedure by which the hearer comes to know p requires the speaker to know p too."

[47] Exceptions are few, and they roughly boil down to two types of cases: first, we have, again, 'selfless asserters', asserting on knowledge-level justification without belief (Lackey 2007). These speakers assert to what is best supported by evidence, although they cannot get themselves to believe it due to some rationality failures. Secondly, we have 'Compulsive Liar' cases (Lackey 2008). Roughly, what happens in these cases is that, although the speaker intends to lie on a regular basis, some external intervention makes it so that she safely asserts the truth.

within city bounds!' is because, most of the time, that is the ideal speed for safety purposes.

On top of all this, note that, in the friendly epistemic environment we inhabit, knowledge is readily available (Kelp and Simion 2015). As such, KNA is not a very stringent norm, it amounts to a fairly user-friendly way to ensure reliable function fulfilment. If that is the case, again, it is plausible that, back at the time of function acquisition, assertion fulfilled its function of generating knowledge in hearers by being knowledgeable.

To see this, consider first perceptual beliefs about middle-sized dry goods. On any non-sceptical account of knowledge, given formation by suitable processes (alternatively: on suitable grounds) in sufficiently hospitable epistemic environments, these beliefs will qualify as knowledge. For instance, my belief that there is a computer on the desk before me qualifies as knowledge: it is produced by a highly reliable ability to recognize computers in an epistemically hospitable environment. Now the crucial point is that formation by suitable processes in hospitable environments is the norm; formation of beliefs by unsuitable process, or in inhospitable environments is the exception. If this isn't immediately clear, consider again my belief that there is a computer on the desk before me and ask yourself what would have to be the case for my belief to fall short of knowledge. Those with some training in epistemology will find it easy to answer this question: I am hallucinating, or I am mistaking a hologram for a computer, whilst unbeknownst to me there is a computer somewhere else on the desk, or I acquire my belief by a highly unreliable process such as a coin-toss, etc. While any of this might come to pass, it is undeniable that, as a matter of fact, it only rarely does. Perceptual beliefs about middle-sized dry goods are not the only cases in point. Consider testimonial belief about propositions of crucial practical importance in our lives: propositions about bills that need to be paid, the nature of the sickness of your cat and the medication that will cure it, what's available at the local restaurant etc. Or consider inferentially supported beliefs that exploit a variety of natural and social regularities: that my car is still parked outside the institute etc. Here too, when beliefs are true and formed by suitable processes in sufficiently hospitable epistemic environments, they will qualify as knowledge. Here too, cases of knowledge are the norm and cases of belief that falls short of knowledge are the exception.

These considerations suggest that, in wide range of cases, knowledge is widely and readily available. All we have to do to acquire knowledge is open our eyes, listen to what other people tell us, attend to our feelings, etc.

In sum, things seem to stand as follows: In the friendly epistemic environment we inhabit, knowledge is readily available. On top of this, knowledge on the speaker side is both necessary and sufficient for generating knowledge on the hearer's side in the vast majority of the cases. Since what we are trying to describe here is a naturalistically plausible story, the oddity of the exceptions constitutes itself in very good reasons to dismiss them: very plausibly, the way in which assertion generated knowledge in hearers at the moment of function acquisition was by being knowledgeable. As such, KNA is vindicated: an epistemically proper assertion will be one that, in normal conditions, is able to fulfil its epistemic function of generating knowledge in hearers by being knowledgeable.

3.1.4 Overriding Functions

A trait/artefact/act can have several e-functions simultaneously, even several e-functions of different types; take, for instance, the functions served by food for humans. One important such function will surely be a biological one, a nourishment function. Plausibly enough, though, on top of this, food also serves an aesthetic function for us, that of generating pleasant gustatory experiences. Now, normally, the aesthetic function complements the nourishing function. It serves, as it were, the greater goal of survival, by increasing the probability of us ingesting nourishing substances. This need not be the case, however; there can be situations where the two functions come in conflict, at which point the more stringent requirement will take precedence and dictate what's the all-things-considered good to observe. Think about a case where I am on a deserted island and all I can eat in order to stay alive are my boots; surely, against my aesthetic well being, that is exactly what I should do, all-things-considered.

Similarly, it is highly plausible that the epistemic function is merely one of the many functions served by assertion. Surely, when I tell you that the weather is nice while sitting with you in a café, generating testimonial knowledge in you with regard to meteorological states of affairs is hardly among my chief concerns. In this case, assertion rather serves a social bonding function.

One of the most important functions of assertion, as with action in general, will be a prudential one, serving our survival. Again, just like in the case of food, the epistemic function will, in most cases, complement this prudential function. Generating testimonial knowledge in one's hearer with regard to an imminent threat, or about the whereabouts of resources are paradigm cases. However, again, this

need not be the case. For instance, even if one knows that one's boss is bald, it may not be polite, prudent, or relevant to point this out to him ((Jessica Brown 2010, 550), henceforth, BALD)): surely, here, the prudential function comes in conflict with the epistemic one and overrides it.

Here is, then, my proposal: both Classical Invariantism and KNA hold. In virtue of the function of assertion of generating knowledge in hearers, one is in a good enough epistemic position to make an epistemically proper assertion that p if and only if one knows that p. In turn, where whether one knows (or 'knows') that p is insensitive to practical matters. Crucially, on the account defended here, what KNA claims is mere epistemic propriety. The standards for all-things-considered propriety of assertion – as for action in general – will vary with context, while standards for both epistemically proper assertion and knowledge will remain fixed. The way to ascertain whether the requirements at work in one case or another are genuinely epistemic requirements is by looking at the function that is plausibly being served.[48] An epistemic function will be associated with an epistemic norm.

To see how this works, consider Williamson's TRAIN case:

TRAIN: Suppose that I, knowing that it is urgent for you to get to your destination, shout "That is your train" upon seeing a train approach the station, although I don't know that is the case; I merely believe there is some chance that is the case, and I think you should check it out. (Williamson (2000)).

According to the present proposal, the assertion in TRAIN is epistemically defective, but all-things-considered proper, due to prudential considerations stepping in and requiring a lower degree of warrant (Override2). In view of the epistemic function of generating testimonial knowledge, this assertion is not permissible. However, in view of the prudential function of raising your chances at catching the train, the assertion in TRAIN is perfectly fine. Given that the prudential constraint overrides the epistemic constraint in this case (as in most), by lowering the degree of necessary warrant, the assertion is all-things-considered proper, which is what triggers our relevant intuitions.

[48] At this point, the reader might worry that the functionalist account defended here, in virtue of being a variety of epistemic consequentialism, suffers from the classical problems associated with this view. Fortunately, this is not the case: in a nutshell, that is because while functionalism is, indeed, a variety of consequentialism, crucially, it is a rule consequentialism. The classical cases against consequentialism, however, arguably, only affect act consequentialism. For extensive discussion, see section #3.2.3 below

Similarly, in ASPIRIN2, strictly epistemically speaking, if you have memorial knowledge that you have aspirin at home, you are permitted to assert. You are in a position to make an assertion that, in normal conditions, will fulfil its epistemic function of generating testimonial knowledge in your hearer. However, prudential constraints referring to the tragic consequences your assertion might have override the epistemic constraint, raise the necessary degree of warrant, and make the assertion all-things-considered improper. As such, again, it is all-things-considered propriety that varies with context, not epistemic propriety.[49]

3.2 Objections and Replies

Before I continue, in what follows, I would like to take a brief look at (and try to answer!) what I take to be the main objections that come to mind when presented with my account. I will try to do justice to three importantly different directions of possible discontent: contextualism and pragmatic encroachment, anti-functionalism and truth-centred functionalism.

3.2.1 Objection #1: A Contextualist Rejoinder

On the view defended here, the contextualist data is explained by normative overriding: while epistemically fine, it is prudentially impermissible for DeRose to assert 'The bank will be open tomorrow' in the high stakes scenario. Again, this claim draws its plausibility from what I have dubbed Value Individuation of normative constraints: look at the goods associated with the norm! In the bank cases, of course, practical goods are at stake when it comes to variation in assertability; therefore, on the account defended here, unassertability is triggered by the prudential norm corresponding to the prudential function of assertion, overriding the epistemic function.

Recall, however, that, according to DeRose, not only can he not assert 'The bank will be open' or the corresponding 'I know that the bank will be open' in high stakes cases, but it is even appropriate for him to deny knowledge to himself. Now, what does the functionalist picture have to say about this?

[49] Note that it is not in my intention to suggest that practical concerns will *always* override epistemic ones (or aesthetic ones, for that matter). The claim made by this chapter (and needed here) is weaker than that: practical requirements will, on occasion, do so. I gather that this is a fairly plausible thought.

Two things: first, several people (e.g. Pritchard 2005) have expressed serious doubts about the plausibility of the knowledge denial data. I tend to agree. Here is why: note that, if at all, it looks as though the natural way to deny knowledge to oneself in high stakes scenarios rather goes along the lines of 'All right, I guess I don't *really* know the bank will be open tomorrow!', rather than the bare: 'I don't know that…'. But it is fairly plausible that the epistemic standing at stake in this assertion– i.e. 'really knowing' – is but a different epistemic standing than knowledge – plausibly something stronger, closer to certainty. To see this, compare, for instance, with 'liking John' and 'really liking (in the sense of having a crash on) John'. It looks as though 'really liking' is but a different state than liking. It is, I submit, not completely implausible that the same is true for 'really knowing', in which case DeRose's denial does little to prove the invariantist wrong.

Second, even if we buy the knowledge denial data, they are hardly problematic for the functionalist. After all, recall that DeRose's denial comes as a reply to his wife's question: "Do you know that the bank will be open tomorrow?'. It looks as though, then, at that point in the conversation, DeRose is faced with a choice between (1) Attributing knowledge to himself – which would, plausibly, in the absence of any qualification, result in a quite risky course of action, (2) Saying something along the lines of: 'I guess we should check, just to make sure!' or (3) Deny knowledge to himself in order to stay on the safe side. Of course, one of the latter two options will be the (prudentially!) preferable one. To my ear, the first is the most natural one. Whichever it is, however, it will not hurt the view defended here, since, again, it is fairly clear that prudential constraints are at work in the choice of speech act.

3.2.2. Objection #2: Shifty Data for Belief

The account defended here explains the Shiftiness Intuition in terms of practical norms overriding the epistemic one; the thought is that, in the high stakes BANK CASE, DeRose cannot permissibly assert that he knows the bank will be open on Saturday due to prudential considerations: his assertion, for instance, might trigger a very risky course of action. It is, then, prudential permissibility, not epistemic permissibility that is at stake in the Shiftiness Intuition.

What about belief, however? After all, one could think that the relevant shiftiness seems to also be present at this level. It looks as though, in high stakes, after his wife raises the possibility of the bank having changed its hours, DeRose is not warranted in holding an

outright belief that he knows that the bank will be open on Saturday. Similarly for the generalized data - an outright belief that the bank will be open also seems impermissible. What does the account defended here have to say about this? After all, while it is plausible that DeRose's assertion might trigger a prudentially risky course of action, that seems less plausible about his belief.

Two things about this: first, crucially, recall that this thesis rejects commonality for belief and assertion. Furthermore, Section #3.3.1 below will make an attempt at a positive argument in support of a view that takes belief to be governed by a weaker norm than assertion. As such, strictly speaking, shifty data about belief do little to affect the story told here about assertion.

That being said, however, is belief turns out to be governed by a shifty norm, this is fairly bad news for the invariantist picture defended here – insofar as we take belief to be justified if and only if permissible. Since I am very sympathetic to this thought, I will set the non-commonality reply aside.

Second, however, even if we abstract from non-commonality, it is not clear to me that, insofar as the intuition of impropriety extends to belief, it is not prudential impropriety that is at stake in this case also. To see why, note that, as the case is built, plausibly, DeRose's outright belief that the bank will be open on Saturday in BANK 2 is as likely to be conducive to risky behaviour as is his corresponding assertion. Furthermore, it looks as though one easy way to ascertain whether my account gets things right here – when it goes to both assertion and belief – is to try to build a case where asserting/believing the relevant proposition is not likely associated with any risky action. If the shiftiness intuition is preserved, this raises serious worries about the prudential nature of the permissibility at stake. Note, though, that building such cases will not be a trivial affair. One way to try and do this will be by removing practical stakes altogether from the picture, and relying on the mere tabling of error possibilities. It is not clear, however, that the Shiftiness Intuition survives this move. After all, I seem to be perfectly warranted in both my belief and the corresponding assertion I am just about to make that there is a computer in front of me, in spite of me in spite of, say, sceptical scenarios being tabled. But see Section #6.2.1 below for more discussion on this matter.

Alternatively, one can try to build a case where the subjects falsely believe high stakes are present, but, by stipulation, no risky action is likely to follow form DeRose's assertion/belief. Say that, unbeknownst to DeRose, his rich grandmother deposited a large sum of money in his account as a present for his birthday, which will be more than enough to cover the check. Doesn't the Shiftiness Intuition survive

this alteration of the case? First, I am not sure it does, as a matter of fact. I can get myself to think both ways. Also, I think the intuition is not stable because it depends on how the case is spelled out. Surely not all cases in which subjects attach false stakes to the situation will trigger impermissibility for assertion/belief. After all, it does not look as though, if I loose my mind and start thinking that if I believe or assert that it will be raining tomorrow, three Martians are going to come and kidnap me from my office, my belief/assertion that it will be raining tomorrow is rendered impermissible.

Second, more importantly, even if we find a way to build the cases such that the Shiftiness Intuition is preserved, the explanation in terms of prudential propriety is still not out of the picture. After all, many people in the literature think of the latter as a subjective affair. On a Bayesian picture, for instance, what matters for prudential propriety is not the actual state of the world, but the subjective probability assigned to the relevant outcome. As such, it is not clear that building such cases will do the intended job against my view to begin with.

3.2.3 Objection #3: Consequentialist Fairies

Here is one legitimate worry about the account I've just put forth. By the looks of it, functionalism seems just another variety of epistemic consequentialism. After all, normativity is taken to drop out of the relevant functions, and we have already described functions as purposes. Isn't this, however, going to expose the account to the classical objections against epistemic consequentialism? Fortunately, not. Or so I will argue.

Here's the recipe for the classical anti-consequentialism line: you take an intuitively epistemic bad (say, a false, unjustified belief, or a false assertion) and stipulate that a great amount of epistemic goodness comes to attach to it on a particular occasion, usually virtue of some otherworldly intervention – say, the Consequentialist Fairy offers you one million pieces of interesting knowledge for holding the respective unjustified false belief or making the respective false assertion. Still, it does not look as though the false belief/assertion in question is epistemically permissible.

Note, though, that 'fairy cases' are only an issue for *act* consequentialism, i.e. the view that, roughly, asks us to maximize epistemic goodness *on each occasion*. The functionalist picture, however, is a *rule* consequentialist picture: according to this variety of consequentialism, the rightness or wrongness of a particular action is a function of the correctness of the rule of which it is an instance. In turn,

the correctness of a rule is determined by the amount of good following it brings about. According to rule consequentialism, following rules that tend to lead to the greatest good will have better consequences overall than trying to maximize in all instances. For instance, according to the account defended here, knowledgeable assertions are good assertions in virtue of conforming to the knowledge norm, which is the norm that generates the most epistemic benefit overall: knowledgeable assertions most often generate testimonial knowledge in hearers. In virtue of this, 'fairy cases' will not affect the functionalist story: contra act-consequentialism, proper function – that is, norm compliance – need not imply function fulfilment – i.e. reaching the corresponding epistemic goal. What matters for norm compliance, however, is proper functioning, not function fulfilment. Good, properly functioning, knowledgeable assertions can fail to fulfil their function of generating testimonial knowledge – for instance, in cases where there are defeaters around. And the other way around: Stella, the creationist teacher, for instance, arguably generates knowledge in her students although she does not believe, therefore she does not know what she's asserting herself.

As such, to go back to the Consequentialist Fairy: even if she offers you all the epistemic benefit in the world, according to the norm defended here, you are still not epistemically allowed to assert non-knowledgeably. Stella's assertion, for instance, is still epistemically impermissible in spite of the fact that her assertion comes with nice epistemic goods.

3.2.4 Objection #4: History

How about if it turns out that we would have been better off as a species if the assertoric practice had never existed? Wouldn't this threaten the very foundation of this proposal? After all, even if biological benefit is not taken to be *essential* to function acquisition, the entire story still rests on the claim that assertion acquired the function of generating knowledge in hearers in virtue of the fact that it did so back in the day, and this was beneficial for our survival. Furthermore, the main reason why we find it plausible that the practice would have disappeared had it not generated knowledge in hearers is because, as a matter of fact, we take it that the latter is beneficial for our survival, while, say, false beliefs are not. As such, it looks as though the account still lives and dies with the presence/absence of a history of biological benefit, to some extent.

Crucially, though, note that the biological benefit claim made and needed here is merely an actuality claim rather than a modal one. Again, the account defended here departs from models put forth by people like Peter Graham and Ruth Millikan in this important respect: epistemic normativity is not, in any way, taken to be modally dependent on biological benefit either being or ever having been present. Rather, what is essential in epistemic function acquisition, and therefore essential for epistemic normativity being in place, is a (short) history of *epistemic* benefit: the trait/action etc. must have produced the relevant epistemic good before. The biological benefit associated with the epistemic one – that is, the fact that epistemic benefit is also good for survival - is taken to be merely a happy coincidence pertaining to this world. As such, if we ever discover that, as a matter of fact, we would have been much better off if we have kept silent rather than engaging in all these language games, the view defended here will be unaffected. It would just follow that the hearers were wrong to suppose that extending their knowledge via testimony was good for them, and therefore they were wrong to not discontinue this practice. I find this result independently plausible. There are many practices humanity has kept alive for centuries from the mistaken belief that they were beneficial. This, however, does nothing to rob the traits/artefacts/actions involved in those practices of their corresponding functions, at the time. War is the clearest example I can think of.

3.2.5 Objection #5: Constitutivity Light

Say that this thesis is right, and knowledge is the norm of assertion in virtue of the fact that the function of assertion is to generate knowledge in hearers. Now, one legitimate question that arises goes along the following lines: how is this rationale any better than the Williamsonian constitutivity line when it comes to contingency considerations? Are we supposed to believe that, if it so happened that assertion had served a different epistemic function, it would have been governed by a different epistemic norm? Or that this shift can happen at any point? Doesn't the account defended here leave this open, and therefore make KNA into a mere historical contingency? Second, relatedly, what is the relation – if any - between the nature of assertion and its normativity? What is the status of this functionalist norm that is being defended? Is it a merely conventional one, subject to the whims of societal evolution? This sounds less than plausible.

Recall that the etiological theory of function aims to offer a naturalistically friendly explanation of the existence of normativity. As such, the coming into being of the respective norms is hardly an accident: it is sourced in evolutionary considerations pertaining to what benefits the organism and what does not.

Note, also, that what this amounts to is but a different sort of a constitutivity claim, conceived on a functionalist model, rather than on the model of games: due to being sourced in e-functions, which, in turn, contribute to the explanation of why the trait/artefact/action in question continues to exist, the functionalist norms are constitutively associated with the corresponding trait/artefact/action: they are constitutively associated with its continuous existence. When functioning properly (i.e. beating) – whether in normal conditions or not – the heart will meet the norm constitutively associated with its continuous existence. Similarly, when functioning properly – i.e. being knowledgeable - whether in normal conditions or not – assertion will meet the norm constitutively associated with generating knowledge in hearers and, correspondingly, with its continuous existence; it will work the way it is supposed to work, where the right way of working is constituted by generating knowledge in normal conditions.

Now here is the worry: going domain-specific for positive feedback seems, at first glance, to rob e-functional accounts of their explanation of the continued existence of a trait. After all, if asserting knowledgeably need not benefit us biologically in order for the relevant speech act to have the corresponding function, nothing seems to be left to explain the continued existence of the trait in question.

Notice, however, that etiological theories of functions are intended to be real-nature theories (Millikan 1984). And, in fact, plausibly enough, knowledgeable assertions are, most likely, beneficial for our survival. So the positive biological feedback that is, in fact, at play, does explain the continued existence of the relevant practice. It explains why the epistemic functions and the corresponding epistemic norms are there; because their being in place benefits us. But notice that this is all we wanted to begin with: a naturalistic explanation of the existence of such oddities as norms and purposes. As such, even though biological benefit does not affect the content of the relevant norms, it does nicely explain how and why the purposes and the norms associated with them arose in the first place.

Finally, note another important advantage of the 'light' constitutivity claim defended here: it also vindicates the Williamsonian intuition that, in an important way, assertion lives and perishes with KNA.

3.2.6 Objection #6: How about truth?

Contra the account defended in this thesis, Ruth Millikan (1984) and Peter Graham (2010) take the function of assertion to be generating true belief rather than knowledge in one's audience. If they are right, one could wonder, would it not be reasonable to suppose that assertion is governed by a corresponding truth norm?

A few things about this: first of all, I take it to be fairly implausible that the function of assertion is generating *mere* true belief rather than knowledge. Here is why: recall that the etiological account of functions is a historical account. The thought is that a particular trait generated some benefit and that's how it acquired its function. However, *mere* true belief is a fairly rare good, while knowledge is readily available. Again, all I have to do in order to come to know that there's a table in front of me is have a look. For me to get a non-knowledgeable true belief, however, the world needs to fail to cooperate somehow (like in Gettier cases, for instance), or else I need to radically change my epistemic behaviour (say, start forming beliefs on coin tosses). Since it is less than plausible, historically, that any of this was the case when assertion acquired its function, we can safely assume that the epistemic benefit generated by assertion at the time of function acquisition was knowledge.

Now, of course, Millikan and Graham could argue, the function at stake need not be *mere* true belief. After all, true belief is implied by knowledge. Take the heart: it pumps blood and, at the same time, it generates a beating sound. Plausibly, it always has. However, we would not want to say that the function of the heart is to pump blood and generate a beating sound, rather than just to pump blood. Why, then, think that the function of assertion is generating knowledgeable true belief rather than just true belief?

Furthermore, the champion of the truth account could argue, on the etiological account, one easy way to ascertain whether a trait T has a function F is by checking whether doing F contributes to the explanation of why tokens of T continue to exist. The fact that it pumps blood in our circulatory system contributes to the explanation of why hearts continue to exist: if they stopped doing it, plausibly, they would cease to exist.[50] The fact that it produces a beating sound fails to satisfy the relevant counterfactual. Generating true belief easily meets this condition: plausibly, even if assertions stopped generating knowledge in hearers and only produced true belief, we would not discontinue the

[50] But see Buller (1998) for an argument to the contrary.

practice. If that is the case, however, why think that the relevant function is knowledge rather than true belief?

Several people in the literature have adduced reasons to believe the function at stake is, indeed, knowledge rather any lesser epistemic standing. Turri (In Press), for instance, puts forth experimental philosophy results suggesting that folk intuition designates transmitting knowledge as the "main point" of asserting. Chris Kelp (Forthcoming) argues for the weaker claim that generating knowledge in hearers is, at least, *one* epistemic function of assertion; it is easy to see, however, that, since knowledge is a stronger epistemic standing than truth, arguing from the claim that generating knowledge is *one* epistemic function of assertion to the stronger, contrastive claim that the relevant function is generating knowledge rather than truth will be fairly trivial. After all, knowledge implies truth; if pumping blood in our circulatory system is one biological function of the heart, it will be fairy implausible to hold that, alongside this particular function, the heart also has the function of pumping.

Rather than rehearsing these arguments, however, what I will do next is try to offer further considerations that seem to speak in favour of the knowledge account when considered against the competing truth account.[51]

First, about the point concerning contribution to continuous existence: it is not clear to me that, in the scenario described above, where assertions would only generate true beliefs, we would not, as a matter of fact, discontinue the practice. Let us try and add details to the envisaged scenario: first, note that what the defender of the truth account needs, this time around, for her argument to go through, is for *mere* true belief generation to be sufficient for keeping the practice alive. For if she wants to make use of, say, Gettiered belief, the suspicion would be that what is doing the trick in preventing the practice from being discontinued is truth plus the corresponding warrant, rather than truth alone.

However, a world of mere true believers involved in asserting things to each other is not very easily conceivable. Note that, what would, presumably, have to be the case, would be something along the following lines: the members of this population would form beliefs on

[51] The argument to follow does not address the possibility of any epistemic standing that falls short of both knowledge and truth being the function of assertion. That is because I take it to be extremely plausible that if assertion would systematically fail to generate true beliefs in hearers, the practice would be discontinued. Note, however, that nothing in what follows excludes the possibility of the relevant function to be generating justified true beliefs (JTB) rather than knowledge. That being said, see Chapter #4 for arguments against epistemic standings that fall short of knowledge being the ones featured in the norm under discussion.

coin tosses, wishful thinking and other such epistemically barren methods, they would all happen to be true, they would assert them to each other and they would all respond with belief to the corresponding assertions. Note, though, that what also needs to be the case is that the members of this population have no clue that the relevant assertions happen to be true – that is, that their peers always luckily hit the truth. Otherwise, the generated beliefs would fail to amount to mere true beliefs, since the believer will have some evidence concerning some good features of the speaker as epistemic agent. This assumption, in itself, is hard to square with our everyday epistemic practices; after all, each and every member of this population will see her peers successfully walking the streets, avoiding obstacles, going to work, doing grocery shopping etc. All this will suggest that these people do form some true beliefs, and thus add warrant to the beliefs generated in their hearers.

Also, this story gives rise to two possible scenarios: either the receivers of testimony are aware that the testifiers are engaged in weird epistemic practices, or they are not. If they are aware, I find it empirically fairly implausible that, under these circumstances, the practice of assertion will be maintained, since this piece of information is likely to act as a very serious defeater for believing the asserted content. On the other hand, a scenario where each and every member of this population forms beliefs on coin tosses but has no clue that everyone else does the same is fairly implausible.

Last but not least, I will briefly turn to the point related to the description of the function. Note, that what the case of the heart suggests is that function ascriptions are value loaded: that is, the description of the function corresponds to the (most) valuable contribution of the respective trait to the relevant system. The function is pumping blood in the circulatory system – not just pumping blood, since pumping it anywhere else would fail to be valuable for the organism; also, not just pumping *something* in the circulatory system, since pumping orange juice would also fail to do the work. On the other hand, pumping blood and making a beating sound does not seem to be in any way more valuable to the organism than merely pumping blood.

Now, the way in which knowledge is more valuable than mere true belief (or any epistemic standing that falls short of knowledge, for that matter) has been a fairly hot topic of debate in the last years (see, e.g. (Pritchard 2010)). One thing is, however, assumed by most[52] actors in the debate: knowledge is, as a matter of fact, more valuable than true belief; the challenge is to explain how, not to argue that it is. If that is

[52] But see Jonathan Kvanvig (2003) and Pritchard (2010) for two notable exceptions.

the case, however, it looks as though, similarly to the case of the heart, value considerations give us reason to describe the function at stake as being knowledge rather than true belief.

Last but not least, note one more thing: if it turns out that Millikan and Graham are right, after all, and the proper function of assertion is generating true belief, it is still arguable that the norm that drops out of this functional schema is a knowledge norm. Here is how: recall that proper functioning is normal functioning, i.e., functioning in the way the trait did back in the day when it acquired its function. Plausibly, again, given considerations pertaining to ready availability, if back in the day, assertion performed its function of generating true belief by being knowledgeable.

3.3 Normative Relations

We have seen that, on the fairly plausible assumption that the function of assertion is to generate testimonial knowledge, we get a knowledge norm of assertion: assertion needs be knowledgeable in order to reliably fulfil its function. Recall, now, that in the previous section we have looked at several alternative attempts to provide a rationale for KNA, and found them wanting. That is, I have argued that the normative inheritance thesis from belief and/or action to assertion is in need of further support.

Now, here are two interesting questions that arise at this point. First, where does the functionalist picture put forth above leave belief and action? After all, there is, intuitively, a clear sense in which assertion, action and belief seem to be intimately connected by their very nature, so any normative framework that stays silent on these issues seems less than satisfactory.

Second, relatedly, can we hope to get a nicely unified picture for all three? This next section deals with just these issues. It is argued that, one the one hand, the prospects of a unified picture look dim, if what is meant by unification is normative commonality: if this thesis is right, the functionalist story delivers non-commonality high and low. On the other hand, however, the picture *is* nicely unified by the fact that all the normative claims put forth drop out of the same functionalist machinery.

3.3.1 Assertion and Belief

In the previous section, we have seen that, if we take the main telos of our epistemic activities to be knowledge, what follows for assertion from a functionalist picture is a knowledge norm. Let us now look at what is the case with belief. Note that, as opposed to assertion, on our knowledge-centric assumption, the function of belief is not transmitting knowledge; belief itself is a device that serves for accurately representing the world. One way for belief to do this is by being knowledgeable; on our knowledge-centric assumption, then, belief aims at being knowledgeable, this is its main epistemic function. Note, though, that if that is the case, that is, if knowledge is the relevant function, there are good reasons to doubt that the corresponding norm will be a knowledge norm.

First, note that, when it comes to normativity at large, norms tend to not share content with the goal they observe. To see this, think of other norms we are familiar with. Take traffic norms: plausibly, they are meant to promote the aim of producing safe traffic. Now, note that norms meant to make it likely that the goal of safe traffic is reached have informative content, i.e. content that tells us how to go about reaching the goal in informative ways: 'Drive at most 50 km/h within city bounds!', 'Stop at the red light!' etc. Similarly, take social norms; say you want to become a biologist; again, there are going to be norms that inform you how to go about it in order to make it very likely that you do become a biologist: 'Go to biology school!', 'Study hard!' Etc. Or take norms of chemistry: say you want to produce an antibiotic. The norms associated with this goal are going to tell you what ingredients to mix and under what conditions to mix them in order to produce an antibiotic. It would be less than informative if all these norms would share content with the goal; for instance, if the norm serving the goal of your becoming a biologist would merely say 'Become a biologist!', or the norms regulating antibiotics production would merely say 'Produce antibiotics!'. Similarly, it would be less than informative if the only driving norm we would have to guide us towards our goal of safe traffic would be 'Drive safely!'.[53]

Now, unless we have good reason to think epistemic normativity is special in this respect, we should expect to get a similar picture for belief: the norms should not share content with the goal. They should be such that they inform us how to go about belief formation in order to make it likely that you end up with knowledgeable beliefs. A norm that

[53] That being said, see Simion, Kelp and Ghijsen (Forthcoming) for an account that distinguishes between the evaluative norm governing belief (identical in content with the goal thereof, stating conditions for what it is for a belief to be a good belief) and a prescriptive norm of belief (stating conditions for reliably reaching the corresponding goal). Crucially, it is argued that the norm that is relevant for epistemic justification is the latter.

tells us to only believe what we know does not seem to guide us much with regard to how to go about reaching our goal of producing knowledgeable beliefs.

And, indeed, the functionalist picture vindicates these intuitions. Crucially, again, function fulfilment and proper functioning can come apart: my non-beating heart can pump blood via, say, some weird magnetic field, but it will not count as functioning properly. Also, function fulfilment is only likely to occur given proper functioning *in normal conditions*, i.e. conditions of function acquisition. My heart can be a perfectly properly functioning heart; if you take it out of my chest and place it in vat with nutrients, however, it will fail to fulfil its function. If knowledge is both the function and the norm of belief, however, properly functioning will entail function fulfilment, and vice versa; this, to say the least, paints a weird functionalist picture for belief.[54]

If that is the case, however, it looks as though what we get out of the normative picture at work is a milder norm for belief than for assertion. That is because, while in the case of assertion, the reliable way to fulfil its epistemic function is by being knowledgeable, in the case of belief the function itself is knowledge. As such, the norm for belief will just stipulate to follow the procedure for belief formation that reliably gets you to have knowledgeable beliefs. Here is, just for illustration, one account that will nicely fit the bill, which I defend elsewhere:

Knowledge-First Functionalism: A belief that p is epistemically permissible/justified iff formed via cognitive processes that have the e-function of generating knowledge ((Simion, Kelp and Ghijsen Forthcoming), (Simion In Progress)).

Many extant broadly reliabilist norms will likely fit the bill, though: we need not take a stance here. What is important to note is that, insofar as the aim of belief is knowledge, the norm will not be a knowledge norm, it will differ in content. If that is the case, and if the story told by this paper for the norm of assertion also goes through, belief and assertion are governed by distinct epistemic norms in virtue of serving different epistemic functions. Assertion aims to transmit knowledge, therefore it needs to be knowledgeable to begin with in order to achieve this. Belief aims to be knowledgeable; as such, the norm governing it is going to be milder; it is going to indicate the proper procedure to reach this aim reliably.

[54] See fn. #52.

3.3.2 Assertion and Action

One central debate in recent literature on epistemic normativity concerns the epistemic norm for action. Several people think that, where one's choice is p-dependent, it is appropriate to treat the proposition that p as a reason for acting only if you know that p (e.g. Hawthorne and Stanley (2008), Williamson (2000)). The most notable competing account puts forth a Bayesian expected utility maximization norm, according to which it is rational to choose an act only if it maximizes expected utility with respect to one's credences and utilities (e.g. Douven (2008)).[55]

This section argues that the debate is afflicted by a category mistake: strictly speaking, there is no such thing as an epistemic norm for action. Let us, on a first approximation, formulate the norm we are talking about as follows:

The X Norm for Action (**XNA**): One is in a good enough epistemic position to act on p only if p has X.

Now, as we have seen, there is no consensus in the literature as to what property X is supposed to stand for, whether it is knowledge, expected utility maximization or what have you. However, there is one thing many people involved in the debate seem to agree on:[56] given that

[55] For an overview of the debate, see Benton (2014). For recent work, see Littlejohn and Turri (eds.) (2014).

[56] By either explicitly endorsing the fact that XNA and its various incarnations are epistemic norms (for an overview, see e.g. Benton (2014)), or by not denying this extremely popular (and notable) assumption (e.g. Douven (2008)).

Crucially, in personal communication, Tim Williamson explicitly denied defending an *epistemic* norm for action. According to him, the knowledge norm governing action is not so much of a particular type or another, as it pertains to the well functioning of action as such: an action based on less than knowledge is, according to Williamson, in a crucial way, malfunctional. To help with making sense of this, Williamson gave the example of walking: according to him, one can easily imagine scenarios where limping is prudentially good – say that it saves your life in some weird way - epistemically good – if you get a million knowledgeable beliefs in return for limping - , morally good – if your limping saves the life of your neighbor – and so on; however, no matter what, limping is still bad, that is, malfunctional walking.

Two things about this: first, note that the value theoretic assumption behind Williamson's normative type attributions above is an act consequentialist one; on such a view, something is epistemically/prudentially/morally etc. permissible insofar as it maximizes the epistemic/prudential/moral good on the particular occasion at stake. Notably, though, act consequentialism is a fairly contested view (see section 3.3.6 above).

Second, even if we grant Williamson that non-knowledgeable action is malfunctional, it still does not follow that he is off the hook when it comes to

we are concerned with how good one's epistemic position needs to be vis-à-vis p in order to make acting on p permissible, XNA is an *epistemic norm*. Therefore, all sides of the debate seem to stand behind the content individuation thesis (CIT): If a norm N determines the amount of epistemic support needed for proper action, then N is an epistemic norm.

Now, we have seen in Chapter #1 of this thesis that CIT is false; hence, there is little reason to believe that XNA captures an epistemic norm. On top of this, this section purports to argue that XNA is actually not an epistemic norm, but a prudential norm with epistemic content.

To see this, recall Value Individuation: prudential norms will be associated with prudential goods, moral norms with moral goods, epistemic norms with epistemic goods etc. If that is the case, however, it is not clear why action in general would be governed by an epistemic norm to begin with.

When does it make sense to regulate something X by a norm of type Y, such as a prudential, moral or epistemic norm? The overwhelmingly plausible answer is: when X has attaining Y as a characteristic aim. Consider antibiotics; the characteristic goal associated with producing them is curing bacterial infections. As such, norms governing this activity will plausibly be there to insure that they reliably do so.[57]

Conversely, when X does not have Y as a characteristic aim, there is little reason to regulate X by a norm of type Y. Producing antibiotics will most likely not be governed by, say, aesthetic norms, given that the characteristic aim associated with antibiotics is not to aesthetically please the consumer; antibiotics can be proper antibiotics even if they are not particularly pretty.

Notice that most actions are not characteristically aimed at any epistemic goals; my eating breakfast, running in the park, brushing my teeth, buying chocolate, helping my old neighbour cross the street are

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committing to one type of norm or another. To see why, note that functions are typed; therefore, so is malfunctioning. Something can be epistemically malfunctional, prudentially malfunctional and so on. Of course, for many traits, actions and artifacts, there will be such a thing as a central function associated with them. Failure to function properly in view of fulfiling this central function will often be referred to as merely malfunctioning. However, this still refers to the failure of properly functioning in view of fulfilling a function of a particular type – which happens to be the central function associated with the artifact, trait or action in question. Take hearts, for instance: it seems proper to say that a non-beating heart s malfunctional. What this amounts to, however, is saying that it fails to properly function towards fulfilling its main function, which is the biological function of pumping blood.

[57] Note that the argument made here explicitly assumes a consequentialist reading of VIT. The reasons for this merely pertain to user-friendliness and space considerations. The argument, however, can be easily reconstructed on a deontological, Fitting Attitude reading thereof. For a rough idea of how this would go, see Section # 6.2.

cases in point. Most of them are aimed at prudential goals, such as maximizing expected practical utility, some of them at moral goals, maybe a few at aesthetic goals. In the absence of any characteristic epistemic aim associated with them, though, there is little reason to think that these actions will be governed by an epistemic norm.

Consider, in contrast, asserting, perceiving, reporting, judging, learning, reading, applying to the university etc. These actions are all characteristically aimed at delivering epistemic goods. As such, it makes sense for them to be governed by epistemic norms.

Thus, having an epistemic norm for action makes perfect sense when it comes to actions characteristically associated with epistemic goals, like assertion. It makes sense to ask what property exactly one's assertion must enjoy for it to be epistemically proper; that is, properly equipped to reach its epistemic goal. However, just as in the case of producing antibiotics, there is no reason to think that my buying chocolate will be governed by an epistemic norm, due to the fact that it is not characteristically aimed at delivering epistemic goods. Assertion is not governed by an epistemic norm in virtue of its being a type of action, but due to its characteristic epistemic function.

In the light of these results, it looks as if the question concerning what one's epistemic relation to p has to be in order to render acting on p permissible should be framed as concerning a type of normativity that plausibly governs all types of action. Uncontroversially, I guess, the most obvious candidate is prudential normativity. Thus, what we are asking is what one's epistemic relation to p has to be in order to render acting on p prudentially permissible.[58]

3.4 Conclusion

This chapter put forth a function-first classical invariantist knowledge account of assertion. According to the view defended here, assertions are epistemically permissible if and only if knowledgeable in virtue of: (1) the fact that the main epistemic function of assertion is to generate knowledge in hearers and (2) knowledge on the part of the asserter being both necessary and sufficient for fulfilling this function.

I have also hinted towards what the functionalist framework has to say about the relationship between assertion and its normative neighbours, belief and action. According to the view defended here, the

[58] Crucially, nothing here excludes there being an epistemic norm for practical reasoning. After all, practical reasoning does serve (at least) the epistemic function of generating knowledge of the conclusion. For more on this, see (Simion, Under Review).

normative commonality assumption for the three is false: knowledge governs assertion, the norm of belief is a weaker, reliabilist norm, and there is no such thing as an epistemic norm for action.

Last but not least, I put forth a functionalist, light constitutivity claim, which stays clear of the difficulties encountered by its Williamsonian counterpart.

In what follows, I defend both the necessity and the sufficiency direction of the norm proposed against the putative counterexamples in the literature.

Chapter IV.
The Necessity Claim

In recent literature, the necessity claim involved in KNA (henceforth, KNA-Nec) is taken by many to be too strong a requirement. The most prominent competing account on the market[59] imposes a weaker norm on assertion, and has been most notably defended, among others, by Igor Douven (2006) and Jennifer Lackey (2008). Roughly, the thought is that one should only assert p if p is rationally credible to one (henceforth, RCNA), where the epistemic status at stake is taken to be equivalent to knowledge-level justification – that is, whatever turns un-Gettiered true belief into knowledge.

Defenders of RCNA argue for their preferred view from different directions; thus, I will discuss them in turn. Douven (2006, 2009) argues that theoretical considerations, such as a priori simplicity, speak in favour of RCNA; furthermore, he thinks the weaker norm will also do just as fine in accommodating the linguistic data generally taken to support KNA-Nec. According to Jennifer Lackey, KNA-Nec, as opposed to RCNA, has a hard time explaining cases in which assertions on some lesser epistemic standings do not seem to render the speakers subject to criticism. All in all, RCNA is taken to score better.

This chapter's main ambition is to tip the balance back in favour of KNA-Nec. To this effect, I will first argue that Douven's argument for the a priori simplicity of RCNA does not go through. Furthermore, I will show that KNA scores better on the second front – that is, accommodating linguistic data. Finally, I will provide a unified defence of KNA-Nec against Lackey's cases, sourced in the normativity of action in general, so as to avoid charges with ad hoc-ness.

4.1 A Priori Simplicity

According to Douven, while both KNA-Nec and RCNA do an equally good job in explaining the empirical data, RCNA is to be preferred due to considerations pertaining to a priori simplicity (2006, 451). That is,

[59] The truth norm of assertion, according to which one's assertion is epistemically permissible only if true, is the other main competitor on the market. I do not engage with this account, mainly because I am convinced by the extant case against it in the literature. See (Williamson 2000) for reasons to thing truth is not the norm and Weiner (2005) for a rejoinder on behalf of the truth account. Furthermore, some of the arguments in support of the necessity claim involved in KNA presented in this chapter will work equally well to mount a defense against a truth norm, or any weaker norm, for that matter. (But see the previous chapter (section #3.2.2) for reasons to believe a truth norm cannot be associated with the epistemic function of assertion.)

Douven argues, RCNA is but an extension of what he dubs 'the zeroth law of rationality':

LR: Only φ if it is rational for you to φ.

From this, Douven derives the corresponding principle for assertion (henceforth LRA):

LRA: Only assert p if it is rational for you to assert p.

Furthermore, Douven goes along with Jonathan Adler (2002) in supporting the belief-assertion parallel. In the light of this, and by the plausible assumption that if it is rational for one to assert that p, then it is rational for one to assert p to oneself, he derives:

RCNA: Only assert p if it is rational for you to believe p,

As such, Douven argues, we are faced with the following situation: RCNA seems to be a mere extension to a fundamental principle of rationality, to wit, LR – to which, he argues, we are committed anyway (2006: 456). Furthermore, the extension is obtained by an application of a principle that is equally endorsed by Williamson (2000) – that is, the belief-assertion parallel.

Say that it turns out that RCNA deals with the linguistic data as well as KNA does. If that is the case, in absence of similar support for KNA – that is, support coming from things that we endorse on independent grounds – RCNA will just provide an a priori simpler explanation of the data, and will thus turn out to be the preferable account.

Now, we have already seen that there is strong reason to believe that the belief-assertion parallel fails to provide the normative goods it is taken to carry. Let us, though, leave this aside, and take a closer look at Douven's LR. Recall that what we are interested in is the epistemic norm governing assertion. As such, Douven (2012, 293) points out that the rationality at stake is going to be epistemic rationality, concerned with the purpose of maximizing epistemic utility. As such, on a first approximation, we can restate the principle as follows:

LR*: You must (epistemically): φ only if it is epistemically rational for you to φ.

Further on, for the particular case of assertion, we get:

LRA*: You must (epistemically): assert p only if it is epistemically rational for you to assert p.

By the belief-assertion parallel, we get:

RCNA*: You must (epistemically): assert p only if it is epistemically rational for you to believe p.

However, there are two major problems with this move. First, (Kelp and Simion 2016) identifies cases in which it looks as if it is epistemically rational for me to assert p in spite of the fact that I have no justification whatsoever to believe p. If that is the case, there is reason to believe that either the epistemic status at stake in RCNA is not knowledge-level justification, or the belief-assertion parallel does not hold. Here is one relevant case:

> Consider a case in which I am offered a million true beliefs for asserting that two plus two equals five. Given, as Douven (2008) himself accepts, that attaining a large body of beliefs with a favourable truth to falsity ratio is our epistemic goal, it would seem highly epistemically rational for me to make this assertion. After all, I will make great progress towards attaining my epistemic goal. At the same time, [...] I do not have justification for believing what I assert (Kelp and Simion 2016, 87).

Of course, arguably, this argument, at least in its present form, only goes through on an act consequentialist value theoretic assumption. Notice, though, that this assumption would create a similar problem for any norm of assertion, including KNA; after all, we can always bring cases in which on a particular occasion one gains more epistemically by breaking the norm. This problem parallels the classical 'scapegoat' objection to act utilitarianism in ethics.

That is not to say, however, that, as things stand, the above argument does not go through. After all, Douven does commit himself to a combination of RCNA and epistemic act consequentialism in several places (e.g. Douven and Kelp (2012)), so it looks as if it is on his shoulders to refine his view in order to escape these worries.

Furthermore, what I will argue next is that, even if we leave consequentialist worries aside, Douven's argument still fails to go through. That is, in what follows, I will point towards a missing link in Douven's argument which renders it incapable of offering support for his favourite account of assertion over competing accounts.

Let us first grant Douven, for the sake of the argument, that his derivation of RCNA* is fine. Recall, however, that Douven also wants rational credibility to stand for knowledge-level justification. Therefore, the claim Douven is making is actually stronger than RCNA*:

RCNA**: You must (epistemically): assert p only if you have knowledge-level justification to believe p.

As such, the argument seems to go along the following lines:

(1) You must (epistemically): only φ if it is epistemically rational for you to φ.
(2) You must (epistemically): assert p only if it is epistemically rational for you to assert p (from (1)).
(3) Belief is assertion to oneself.
(4) If it is epistemically rational for one to assert that p, then it is epistemically rational for one to assert p to oneself.
(5) You must (epistemically): assert p only if it is epistemically rational for you to believe p (from (2), (3) and (4)).
(6) You must (epistemically): assert p only if you have knowledge-level justification to believe p. (from (5))

It becomes clear then that Douven misses an argument from (5) to (6); that is, an argument to establish the equivalence between rational credibility and knowledge-level justification.

Note, though, that when first presented, the argument was not supposed to establish more than (5). That is because Douven (2006) does not take much of a stance with regard to what the notion of rational credibility in RCNA is supposed to stand for. Douven (2006, 459) does, though, gesture in the direction of Keith Lehrer's (1990) coherentist theory of justification, and in later personal communication with several authors he acknowledges that he has knowledge-level justification in mind (see e.g. Kelp and Simion (2016) for discussion). In contrast, Lackey (2008, 128) explicitly states that knowledge-level justification is the epistemic status at stake.

However, at the end of the day, this does not help Douven much. Here is why: even if Douven were to not stand behind any particular account of rational credibility, his argument would end up equally supporting whatever norm of assertion that also comes with a well-defended norm for rational belief, including KNA. Inasmuch as rational credibility is supposed to stand for knowledge-level justification, both the KNA and RCNA defender need a further argument for their preferred account of normativity of belief in order to get support from

Douven's 'zeroth law of rationality'. If that is the case, as things stand, Douven's argument offers as much support for KNA as to RCNA. To see this, let us have a look at the epistemic extensions of Douven's LR for belief:

LRB*: You must (epistemically): believe p only if it is epistemically rational for you to believe p.

Given that Douven wants rational credibility to stand for knowledge-level justification, we get:

LRB**: You must (epistemically): believe p only if you have knowledge-level justification for p.

Both of these principles state epistemic norms for belief. However, only the first is a direct instance of LR*. The second presupposes that it is epistemically rational for you to believe p if and only if you have knowledge-level justification for p.

However, why should we accept without further argument that epistemically rational credibility is knowledge-level justification and not some other epistemic standard? Many people in the literature argue for different epistemic norms for belief: truth and knowledge are the most common counter-candidates.[60] Williamson himself, for instance, takes it that the epistemic norm for belief is knowledge – that is, one should only believe p if one knows p.

As such, for Williamson, it will only be epistemically rational to believe p if one knows that p.[61] Therefore, Williamson's position is perfectly compatible with RCNA*: one must, indeed, only assert p if p is rationally credible to one, where p is rationally credible to one only if one knows that p. Therefore, one should only assert p if one knows p. Thus, insofar as we are missing an argument for a knowledge-level justification norm for epistemically rational belief, Douven's derivation fails to offer support for his preferred norm over KNA.

To sum up: we have seen that, against Douven's argument fails to favour RCNA over KNA. By the same token, Douven's attempt to provide independent theoretical support for RCNA fails. If that is the case, all we are left with for our scoreboard are empirical data. This still does not mean much for KNA, though; after all, if the RCNA supporters are right, and both norms deal equally well with these data, there is still

[60] See Gibbons (2013) for discussion.

[61] While Williamson (2000) is unclear on whether rational belief is governed by a knowledge norm, in more recent work he openly stands behind this claim (e.g. his 2013 exchange with Comesana and Cohen).

an argument to be made that one should go for RCNA on grounds of less demandingness.

Thus, let us have a look at how the two fare when it comes to empirical adequacy.

4.2 Linguistic Data

KNA is notably strongly supported by linguistic data concerning: 1) The intuitive impropriety of asserting 'My ticket lost' before knowing the results of the lottery draw; according to the vast majority of the literature, lottery propositions are not knowable and therefore, by KNA, unassertable. 2) The fact that assertions can be challenged by the question 'How do you know that p?'; if knowledge is the norm of assertion, it makes sense that the hearer expects the speaker to know what he asserted. 3) The paradoxical soundingness of Moorean statements of the form 'p but I don't know that p' (see below).

Now, defenders of RCNA would have it that their favourite norm does not fall far behind in these respects. Douven (2006, 2009) argues that, in terms of empirical adequacy, RCNA does as well as KNA in explaining all of the above. Here is how: by Douven's lights, the intuitive unassertability of lottery propositions is triggered by the fact that not only are they not knowable, but, in accordance with the most recent solutions to the Lottery Paradox[62], they are not even rationally credible to one. Therefore, they are also unassertable by RCNA (2006, 459).

When it comes to explaining the 'How do you know?' challenge, Douven argues that, even if KNA is false, due to the mostly friendly epistemic environment we inhabit, we typically know what we assert; as such, it makes sense that hearers would assume it to be the case (2006, 469).[63]

This chapter will not take issue with Douven's case in either of these two respects; that is mostly because I agree with Douven on the former and I find the latter fairly plausible. What I will, though, discuss in more detail is the RCNA explanation of the paradoxical soundingness of Moorean statements. I will argue below that not only does RCNA not fare as well as KNA in this respect, but that it does not even come close to giving a satisfactory account.

Note, first, that it is widely acknowledged that KNA offers a very straightforward explanation of why sentences such as 'It is Wednesday

[62] See Douven (2006) section (2) for a brief overview. For more support, see (Smith 2016).

[63] Douven does acknowledge that the RCNA explanation falls short of the simplicity of that of KNA here.

but I don't know that it is Wednesday' and 'It is Wednesday but I don't believe that it is Wednesday' sound paradoxical to us. If knowledge is the norm of assertion, on the plausible assumption that knowledge distributes across conjunctions, one is in a good enough epistemic position to assert 'p but I don't know that p' only if one knows both conjuncts. However, since knowledge is factive, one only knows the second conjunct if it is true that one does not know that p. But that contradicts knowing the first conjunct. Thus, according to KNA, one cannot meet the conditions for making a proper assertion of the form 'p but I don't know that p' (Williamson 2000, 253). Furthermore, if KNA is true, it is plausible that when the speaker asserts that p, the hearer is led to believe that she knows that p;[64] therefore, when one asserts the second conjunct of a Moorean statement, one denies what one has led one's hearer to believe by asserting the first conjunct (Moore 1962, 277). Thus, KNA explains why the conjunction 'p but I don't know that p' is not only unassertable, but it also sounds paradoxical.

It is easy to see that, by similar reasoning, KNA scores equally well when it comes to Moorean statements with belief. If, by KNA, one is supposed to know both conjuncts of the Moorean statement, given that knowledge implies belief, it follows that one has to 1) believe that p and 2) know that one does not believe that p. Given, again, factivity of knowledge, one needs to 1) believe that p and 2) not believe that p. Thus, the conditions for proper assertability of Moorean propositions with belief cannot be met and, again, on similar grounds as above, it makes sense that such statements sound paradoxical to the hearer.

At a first glance, RCNA does not seem to be able to give as good an explanation of the phenomenon, given that rational credibility is not factive. In his 2006 paper, Douven himself acknowledges the superiority of KNA on this front; thus, he argues that, while RCNA can also make sense of why Moorean statements come with a paradoxical flavour, KNA scores better in terms of simplicity. Douven's early explanation goes, roughly, along the following lines: first of all, notice that the champion of RCNA need not hold that Moorean statements are not assertable. All she needs is a good explanation of the fact that they sound paradoxical. Now, it is a fact that we do not encounter Moorean

[64] In what sense does asserting p lead the hearer to believe that the asserter knows p? The received view is that it is a matter of 'presenting oneself' as knowing; however, people do not usually go to much into detail about this. One thing: if it is an implicature that is at stake here, it will probably not be a mere conversational implicature, since it is clearly not cancellable. Most likely, what we are dealing with is a conventional implicature (non-cancellable); for more on this distinction, see Grice (1989, 25-39).

statements every day. If that is the case, it also makes sense that they sound odd to us, due to lack of exposure. Why is it, though, that we do not hear Moorean statements every day? Well, according to Douven, although KNA is strictly speaking false, it is the case that we typically know what we assert. That is, in normal, friendly environmental conditions, if p is rationally credible to me, I also know that p. Given this, Moorean sentences are extremely rarely uttered, therefore extremely rarely heard, which explains their odd-soundingness. As such, according to Douven, although RCNA does not offer an equally straightforward explanation as KNA for the oddity of Moorean statements, it is able to accommodate the data in a perfectly plausible way (2006, 474).

In later work, though, Douven (2009) comes back to the issue and concedes that his early explanation of the odd-soundingness of Mooreean sentences remains unsatisfactory; after all, many expressions we do not often encounter do not seem to share the odd-soundingness of Moorean statements. Consider, for instance, 'John seeks a unicorn'; surely we do not hear this every day. Still, it seems clear enough that whatever is happening when one hears a Moorean sentence pertains to a completely different category of oddness than that of other sentences to which we have little exposure (2009, 363).

However, Douven (2009) argues that, on the bright side, on more careful examination, RCNA is able to do as good a job as the knowledge norm in accommodating the odd-soundingness of Moorean statements. That is because, according to him, not only are the latter statements not knowable, but, on a Bayesian analysis, they are also not rationally credible, and, therefore, unassertable. Roughly, the argument goes as follows: first, Douven assumes that one plausible and fairly weak requirement on rational credibility is that a person believes p rationally only if it does not readily follow strictly on the basis of the assumption of her rationally believing p plus some fairly uncontroversial doxastic principles[65] that her degrees of belief are not probabilities. Second, Douven proves that, if one assumes, towards a *reductio*, that one rationally believes Moorean sentences, it does follow that one's degrees of belief are not probabilities. Thus, Douven argues, Moorean sentences are not rationally credible and therefore not assertable.

Even if we accept Douven's unassertability diagnosis, though, there are still two major problems for his account. First, even if RCNA is

[65] (1) if you rationally believe p and q you also rationally believe p; (2) rationally believing that p requires that your degree of belief that p exceeds your degree of belief that non p, and (3) if you rationally believe some p, then your degree of belief that you believe p is at least as great as your degree of belief that you don't believe p.

the norm of assertion, it is not immediately clear that laymen would immediately 'feel' that Moorean statements are unassertable by RCNA. After all, by Douven's own lights, Moorean statements are, at first glance, rationally credible to one – Douven himself granted their assertability by RCNA in his 2006. Furthermore, proving that Moorean statements are not rationally credible, as we have seen, required quite some amount of work: "it is not immediately clear that it could never happen that, for some φ, φ is rationally credible to a person and at the same time it is rationally credible to this person that she does not know φ" (2009, 363). But if it is not immediately clear to philosophers that this is the case, how can it be that it is as clear to laymen as to trigger such feeling of paradox?

Second, crucially, even if we put this problem aside, mere unassertability will not suffice for doing the intended work here. Recall that the KNA explanation of the paradoxical soundingness of Moorean statements had two essential components: first, there was the unassertability; second, the heard contradiction triggered by it. Notice, also, that the former without the latter would do quite a poor job in what empirical adequacy is concerned. After all, there are many sentences for which one cannot ever meet the conditions for assertability imposed by KNA; take, for instance, necessary falsehoods. By KNA, and given factivity of knowledge, '2+2=5' is unassertable, due to it being necessarily false and, therefore, unknowable. However, just like in the case of 'John seeks a unicorn', the oddity involved in hearing someone assert '2+2=5', if any, is definitely of a completely different sort than the paradoxical soundingness of Moorean statements. As such, it looks as if what completes the work for empirical adequacy for KNA's explanation of the latter is the heard contradiction triggered by what the hearer is led to believe by the assertion of the first conjunct, together with the assertion of the second.

We have seen that, according to Douven, Moorean statements are not rationally credible to one, and, therefore, by RCNA, not assertable. Now, similarly to the case of KNA, this result, on its own, will not do the intended work in accounting for the paradoxical soundingness at stake. To see this, consider the case of lottery propositions; we have seen that according to Douven, they are not rationally credible, and therefore, by RCNA, not assertable. However, again, if I assert 'My ticket did not win' in absence of any inside information about the draw, although I am criticisable for making an improper assertion, there is not much feeling of oddity there to be experienced by the hearer. Again, while merely unassertable propositions do trigger a feeling of impropriety, this still does not come close to the paradoxical soundingness of Moorean statements. To see

this, consider, in contrast: 'My ticket did not win but I don't believe my ticket did not win'.

If that is the case, Douven needs more for his argument to work. What needs to be the case is not only that Moorean statements are unassertable by RCNA, but also that this triggers their paradoxical soundingness. Recall the KNA explanation of the latter: knowledge is the norm of assertion, therefore when one asserts that p one leads one's hearer to believe that one knows that p, which is contradicted by the second conjunct; therefore, the heard contradiction. Let us try to construct an RCNA account along similar lines: when I assert that p I lead my hearer to believe that p is rationally credible to me. Notice, however, this does not contradict the second conjunct in any of the two Moorean schemas that we have been looking at. Take, for instance, the case of someone who is (irrationally) afraid of flying and consider his relationship to the proposition 'Flying is the least dangerous mode of transportation'. Even if the corresponding Moorean sentences are not rationally credible to her, it is certainly not contradictory for that person to say that p is rationally credible to her but she doesn't know or believe it. As such, it looks as if Douven is still missing an explanation of the paradoxical soundingness of Moorean sentences.

4.3 The 'Blameless Asserter' Objection

Norms govern actions in all walks of life. For better or worse, we are capable of violating these norms and do so frequently. When we do break the rules, we are criticisable for breaking them. Sometimes, we are even deserving of blame. However, the latter is not always the case. Often enough we violate rules and still walk free of blame. The compulsive and small children are paradigm cases of blameless violators of norms.

While it is widely accepted that norms can be violated blamelessly, and while there is a pretty reasonable understanding of when this happens implicit in the literature, there are few if any explicit accounts.[66] This chapter supplies this lack. Its ambition is to develop a normative framework for action in general including detailed accounts of criticisability, blamelessness and blameworthiness.

[66] Recent literature in epistemology witnesses some interest in this issue and some steps in the direction of a worked out account are being taken as we speak. Notably, (Timothy Williamson forthcoming) and (Clayton Littlejohn forthcoming), both offer conditions for blamelessness. However, their conditions are at best sufficient. Neither offers a fully-fledged normative framework of the kind offered here, which includes both necessary and sufficient conditions for blamelessness relative to a single norm and all-things-considered blamelessness.

Assertion is an action. As such, the aim of this section is to apply the normative framework to the case of assertion. It will be argued that this allows its champions to defuse a prominent line of objection against KNA-Nec, most notably championed by Jennifer Lackey, which ventures to show that the knowledge requirement on permissible assertion is too strong.

4.3.1 The Cases

In order to achieve this, foes of KNA-Nec adduce cases in which a speaker is said to make a permissible assertion, whilst not knowing what they assert. Crucially, evidence that the assertion is permissible is supposed to reside in the fact that the relevant speakers are not deserving of criticism or alternatively that they are blameless. Here are some characteristic statements of the argumentative strategy:

> I shall show that there are cases in which a speaker asserts that *p* in the absence of knowing that *p* without being subject to criticism in any relevant sense, thereby showing that knowledge cannot be what is required for proper assertion (Lackey 2007, 595).

> [I]f breaching a rule makes one blameworthy, which typically it does, then, [in the relevant cases], on the knowledge account, the asserter comes out as being blameworthy, contrary to intuition (Douven 2006, 477).

The classical cases that foes of KNA-Nec have adduced against KNA-Nec are cases in which speakers assert (i) justified false beliefs and (ii) Gettiered beliefs as well as (iii) cases of selfless assertion. By way of illustration, consider the following examples:

1. Assertion on justified false belief

FAKE SNOW. [I]t is winter, and it looks exactly as it would if there were snow outside, but in fact that white stuff is not snow but foam put there by a film crew of whose existence I have no idea … [I] assert that there is snow outside (Williamson 2000).

2. Assertion on Gettiered belief

FAKE BARNS. [S]uppose that Wendy correctly sees the only real barn that, unbeknownst to her, is completely surrounded by barn facades and asserts to me 'There was a barn in the field we just passed' on this basis (Lackey 2008).

3. Selfless assertions

CREATIONIST TEACHER. Stella is a devoutly Christian fourth-grade teacher […] Part of this faith includes a belief in the truth of creationism and, accordingly, a belief in the falsity of evolutionary theory. Despite this, Stella fully recognizes that there is an overwhelming amount of scientific evidence against both of these beliefs […] [S]he regards her duty as a teacher to include presenting material that is best supported by the available evidence, which clearly includes the truth of evolutionary theory. As a result, while presenting her biology lesson today, Stella asserts to her students, 'Modern day *Homo sapiens* evolved from *Homo erectus*,' though she herself neither believes nor knows this proposition (Lackey 2007).

In all of these cases, the agents are said not to be subject to criticism or not to be blameworthy. Since they violate KNA-Nec, it would seem that KNA-Nec makes incorrect predictions about these cases. Hence KNA-Nec is in trouble.

Champions of KNA-Nec often argue that speakers who assert justified false beliefs and Gettiered beliefs violate KNA-Nec but do so *blamelessly*. In particular, they point out that 1. In cases of selfless assertion, plausibly, the teacher is not speaking for herself, but for the community of educators (Turri 2015), which explains the felt propriety of her assertion, and that 2. when in doing something one breaks a norm because one reasonably believes that what one does is permissible, then one is blameless. Since this is the case with agents in cases like FAKE SNOW and FAKE BARNS, these agents are blameless. These speakers assert what they assert because they reasonably believe that they know what they assert and, in consequence, that they are permitted to assert as they do. If so, it is reasonable for them to believe that they satisfy KNA-Nec. As a result, they are blameless when asserting as they do.

However, there are problems with both these accounts. Let us start with the latter. It may be that there are unsophisticated speakers who do not even have the concept of knowledge.[67] They, too, may be in cases in which they assert justified false beliefs or Gettiered beliefs.

[67] See Section #6.3 for related discussion.

Since they do not have the concept of knowledge, they are not in a position to host reasonable beliefs about knowledge in the first place. As a result, the envisaged explanation of why agents in cases like FAKE SNOW and FAKE BARNS are blameless will not work here (Gerken 2011).

Regarding SELFLESS ASSERTION cases, Jennifer Lackey (2007) rightly points out that it is fairly easy to redescribe the case such that no social role is at stake anymore; say, for instance, that Stella is speaking to a friend when making the same assertion.

At a more general level, foes of KNA-Nec worry that the blamelesness response is ad hoc. Here is one very clear expression of this worry:

> [A] general worry with excuse manoeuvres is that they form very generic ways of immunizing proposed norms. Without a principled account of when an agent is excused, every counterexample to a norm may be rebutted by upholding that the agent is excused from violating the norm. As we have seen, the proponents of [KNA-Nec] have yet to provide a viable principled account of excusability (Gerken 2011, 544).

Now, what I will do in the next section is offer exactly what Gerken claims champions of KNA-Nec are missing: a perfectly general normative framework that vindicates the so-called 'excuse manoeuvre'.

4.3.2 Criticism and Blame: A Full Normative Framework

It is widely acknowledged in the literature that a permissible action is a blameless action. This applies at the level of specific norms such as the rule of Uno requiring players to call Uno when playing their penultimate card. If you do call Uno when playing your penultimate card, your action is permissible by this norm and so *blameless relative to this norm*.

Consider next a situation in which a particular norm is violated. Say, you played your penultimate card without calling Uno. You violated a rule of Uno. If so, you can, of course, be prima facie legitimately criticised for violating this norm. In the Uno case, we may do this for instance by saying: "You didn't call Uno!"

Even so, it may be that you violate a norm and yet you are blameless for so doing. If so, you are also, of course, *blameless relative to*

this norm. More specifically, there are three ways in which this may happen.

One way of blamelessly violating a particular norm is through overriding.[68] This happens when the requirements of the norm you are violating are in conflict with the requirements of another norm that takes precedence in the situation. For instance, suppose you are playing a game of Uno and are required by the rules of Uno to call Uno when playing your next card. Suppose, at the same time, someone will kill your neighbour if you do so. What the rules of Uno require of you is in conflict with the requirements of moral norms, which take precedence here. In other words, moral norms override the rules of Uno. When, because of this, you go on to violate the rules of Uno, you do so blamelessly.

The second way of blamelessly violating a norm is by violating it because[69] your action is not under your control. Suppose, for instance, that you have been brainwashed by your guru not to call Uno when playing your penultimate card. Here you violate the rule but are clearly blameless for doing so.

Finally, the third way manifests itself in situations in which you violate a norm because you are unaware that this is what you are doing.[70] Suppose, for instance, that you are unaware that the rules of Uno require you to call Uno when playing your penultimate card. As a result, you do not do so. In this case you violate a rule of Uno. Again, you are blameless for doing so. Ignorance excuses also.

With regard to the second and the third way of blamelessly violating a norm, some qualifications are needed. To see why, suppose that you knew that you would undergo brainwashing were you to go back to your guru. You had also promised not to go back. However, you went anyway. The impermissible act you are made to perform may be out of your control. Even so, you are blameworthy (see below) for another act, going back to your guru, of which the impermissible act is a consequence. As a result, you are not blameless for violating the rule of Uno. Strictly speaking, then, lack of control excuses only when it is itself blameless.

Similarly, suppose that, in our toy case, you had promised to read up on the rules of Uno before playing but did not do so. In this case, you are unaware of the relevant rule of Uno. Even so, you are blameworthy for another act (in this case an omission), your failure to

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[68] For a detailed account see, e.g., (Chisholm 1964).

[69] 'Because' here is crucial to blamelessness. See (Frankfurt 1969).

[70] See for example (Ishtiyaque Haji 1998) and (Michael Zimmerman, 1997). However, that ignorance excuses was already recognised by Aristotle in the Nichomachean Ethics.

read up on the rules of Uno, of which your failure to call Uno is a consequence. As a result you are not blameless for not calling Uno. Strictly speaking, then, ignorance excuses only when it is itself blameless (Zimmerman 1997).

In sum, then, here is this chapter's proposal for an account of blamelessness with respect to specific norms:

Norm-Specific Criticisability. An agent is prima facie legitimately criticisable relative to a specific norm N for φ-ing iff φ-ing violates N

Norm-Specific Blamelessness. An agent is blameless relative to a specific norm N for φ-ing iff:
(1) φ-ing is permissible by N or
(2) φ-ing violates N but the agent φs
(2.a) in order to comply with the requirements of a (non-overridden) overriding norm or
(2.b) because this is blamelessly out of her control or
(2.c) because the agent is blamelessly ignorant that φ-ing violates N.

On this account, an action can be criticisable relative to a specific norm and, at the same time, blameless relative to that very same norm. While this may look odd at first sight, on reflection, it is entirely as it should be. Actions are often performed in the public sphere and, as such, are observable by others, who may pick up the forms of behaviour exhibited. When you fail to call Uno when playing your penultimate card and so violate a rule of the game, this may be observed by someone else who will pick up your behaviour and, as a result, may violate the rule in the future, too. By allowing for criticisms of actions that violate specific norms we can work against the spread of norm-violating forms of behaviour. Since this is a good thing, it makes sense for us to allow for such criticisms. At the same time, we may also want to grant that a norm has been broken blamelessly by the agent. We do not want to hold the norm violation against her: she was blamelessly ignorant, things were blamelessly out of control and so on. If so, there is excellent reason for us to allow criticisability relative to a specific norm and blamelessness relative to the very same norm to coexist.[71]

Thus far we have looked at the blamelessness of an action with respect to specific norms. However, it is common to distinguish between assessments of actions with respect to specific norms and all-things-considered assessments of actions. All-things-considered

[71] This is also why Norm-Specific Criticisability and Norm-Specific Blamelessness need be kept apart.

assessments take into account the entire normative profile of an action and assesses whether the action was permissible, required, or forbidden in view of its entire normative profile. Unsurprisingly, then, just as an action can be blameless relative to a specific norm, it can also be all-things-considered blameless. For that reason, let us extend the above account to all-things-considered blamelessness.

An action is all-things-considered blameless if it is all-things-considered permissible. There are, in turn, two ways in which this can happen.

First, an action is all-things-considered permissible if it is permissible by all the specific norms that apply to it (henceforth also *fully permissible* for short). Suppose you call Uno when playing your penultimate card and thus comply with the rules of Uno. Suppose, in addition, you do not thereby violate any practical and moral norms and that no other norms apply to your act. Then your calling Uno is all-things-considered permissible.

Second, an action is all-things considered permissible if it is permissible by all (non-overridden) overriding norms that apply to it. Suppose you do not call Uno when playing your penultimate card and thus violate a rule of Uno. Suppose, in addition, you violate a practical norm in so doing: you will be punished and are less likely to win. At the same time, your neighbour will die if you call Uno and so calling Uno is prohibited by moral norms. Suppose there are no further norms applying to your action. In order to save your neighbour's life, you do not call Uno. In this case, your action is all-things-considered permissible. The moral norms override the norms of Uno and the practical norms (without being themselves overridden by further norms) and your not calling Uno is permissible by the moral norms.

To repeat, what we have seen now are two ways in which an action can be all-things-considered blameless in virtue of being all-things-considered permissible. That said, even an action that is all-things-considered impermissible can be all-things-considered blameless.

Here is one plausible thought: an all-things-considered impermissible action is all-things-considered blameless if the action is blameless relative to all specific norms that apply to it. Suppose that you play your penultimate card without calling Uno. However, this is because you are blamelessly unaware that there is a rule requiring to you call Uno when playing your penultimate card. Suppose that your action is permissible by moral and practical norms and that there are no further norms applying to your action. In this case, you are all-things-considered blameless for not calling Uno. Since your act is permissible by moral and practical norms, it is blameless relative to

these norms. Since you do not call Uno because you are blamelessly unaware that there is a rule requiring you to do so, you are blameless relative to this rule. Since these are all the rules that apply to your action in this case, your action is blameless relative to all specific norms that apply to it. So, it is all-thing-considered blameless.

Finally, an agent is blameworthy if and only if she is not all-things-considered blameless.

In sum, here is the proposal:

All-Things-Considered Blamelessness. An agent is all-things-considered blameless for φ-ing iff:

(1) φ-ing is all-things-considered permissible (that is, either fully permissible or permissible by all (non-overridden) overriding norms that apply to it) or

(2) φ-ing is all-things-considered impermissible but the agent's φ-ing is blameless relative to all specific norms that apply to it.

All-Things-Considered Criticisability/Blameworthiness. An agent is blameworthy for φ-ing iff she is not all-things considered blameless for φ-ing.

It may be worth noting that, according to this account, criticisability occurs at the level of assessments by specific norms. In this way, it is fine-grained, as it were. In contrast, blameworthiness occurs at the level of all-things-considered assessments and so is coarse-grained. Blamelessness can occur at both levels.

This completes the proposed normative framework for criticisability, blamelessness, and blameworthiness. Crucially, this is a perfectly general framework, in the sense that it applies to action in general. That said, in what follows, I will apply the framework to the speech act of assertion. If the framework predicts that the speakers in the putative counterexamples to KNA-Nec (as well as their unsophisticated counterparts) are indeed blameless, the ad hoc-ness worry can be laid to rest. The blamelessness response will clearly be available to champions of KNA-Nec.

Let us see whether we get the desired results. First, Norm-Specific Blamelessness entails that an agent is blameless relative to a specific norm N for φ-ing if φ-ing violates N but the agent φs because the agent is blamelessly ignorant that φ-ing violates N. There are a number of ways in which one can be blameless for violating a specific norm in virtue of being blamelessly ignorant that one is doing so. One such way is if one does what one does because of a reasonable belief

that what one is doing is permissible. If one believes that what one is doing is permissible, then one does not believe that one is violating a norm. If so, one is ignorant of the fact that one is violating a norm. If one's belief is reasonable, then one's ignorance is blameless. (2.c) is satisfied. And, of course, this is exactly what champions of KNA-NEC have claimed is going on in cases like FAKE SNOW and FAKE BARNS. The speakers assert out of a reasonable belief that they know and so that asserting is permissible. This means that they are blamelessly ignorant for their assertions.

While acting out of a reasonable belief that what one does is permissible is one route to blameless ignorance, it is not the only route. Others are available as well. To see this, recall our Uno case in which you are just blamelessly unaware of the fact that there is a rule requiring you to call Uno when playing your penultimate card. In this case you may have no belief either way on whether you are complying with the rules of Uno.[72] So it is not as if you play in the way you do because of a reasonable belief that this is permissible. Rather, you blamelessly have no belief on the relevant rule of Uno whatsoever. Thus, according to the above framework, another way to blameless ignorance is via a blameless *lack of belief* concerning the relevant rules. And this is of course exactly what we find with cognitively unsophisticated agents, such as agents who do not even have the concept of knowledge to begin with. Any such agent is incapable of even representing KNA-NEC. If they are blameless for not having this concept, as they typically will be, they, too, will satisfy (2.c) and so come out blameless for violating KNA-NEC.

Let us now turn to Stella, the selfless asserter. I agree with Lackey that the social role is not essential to these cases. It is the prudential constraint, no matter its source (i.e., dictated by a particular social role or not), that does the trick: in virtue of it, Stella is all-things-considered blameless for her assertion. Recall that in line with action in general, an agent is all-things-considered blameless for φ-ing if φ-ing is permissible by all (non-overridden) overriding norms that apply to it. Plausibly enough, given the usual norms governing the activity of teaching – that is, "presenting students with material that is best supported by the available evidence" (Lackey 2007, 548) – Stella is all-things-considered blameless, as more stringent requirements are overriding the epistemic norm governing her assertion. This, however, in no way implies that her assertion is proper according to the latter. To see this, imagine how Stella's KNA-Nec-proper assertion would have

[72] If this is not immediately obvious, note that you may know that you have not been filled in on all the rules of the game yet and are taught various rules as you go along.

looked like: 'I don't know how our species came into being. Evolutionary theory says that Homo sapiens evolved from Homo erectus, but I don't believe that's true. I believe that men were created by God, but I have no scientific evidence that this is so.' Would we really want this to be what our children get from their biology course? Certainly not. Prudentially, Stella's assertion is surely impermissible. In fact, I trust that Stella would soon lose her job if she were to keep this kind of assertions coming. In contrast, let us change the structure of the audience: imagine that Stella would make the KNA-Nec-proper assertion in a conversation with her mother. Surely, we will no longer think she deserves criticism in this case.

What comes to light, then, is that the envisaged response by champions of KNA-Nec is borne out by the normative framework from the previous section. Moreover, the framework also delivers the right results for Gerken's cases of assertions by cognitively unsophisticated agents. As a result, not only is the blamelessness response available to them, the worry of ad hoc-ness is addressed too.

4.3.3 Taking Back

In reply to responses featuring blamelessness breach of the norm put forth by KNA-Nec champions, Jonathan Kvanvig (2009) argues that the subjects don't need excuses for their acts, as they have done nothing wrong to begin with. To support this claim, he distinguishes between two ways of taking back an assertion: "in some cases of correction, we take back the content of our speech act, and in other cases we apologize for, and regret, the very act itself". For example, if we assert p and then are shown that p is false, we take back the content of our speech act, but we needn't apologize for or regret the very act itself. "In fact, were [we] to apologize, the natural response would be dismissive: Give it a rest, nobody's always right..." According to Kvanvig, the same distinction plays out with Gettiered assertions too. Thus, presumably, in the case of Wendy above, if after she asserts "There's a barn in the field", and I point out to her that she can't possibly know that, as we are in Fake Barn County, she would just take back *what* she said, not to apologize for having said it.

Kvanvig argues that things are different when you don't have justification for what you say, even if, by some bizarre twist, you turn out to be right. In support of this, he offers the case of Billy Bob, a Texas Democrat, who, based on a headline on a tabloid, asserts to his friend Sue: "George Bush is a communist!" When Sue points out to him that he should not trust tabloids, Billy Bob apologizes: "You're right, I shouldn't

have believed that paper and I shouldn't have said what I did. I take it back."

According to Kvanvig, in this situation, apologizing and taking back the speech act itself is the right thing to do. He argues that norms of assertion are norms governing a certain type of human activity, and thus relate to the speech act itself rather than the content of such an act. As such, only when the speech act itself is at fault, do we have reason to think that some norm of assertion is broken; when only the content of the assertion needs to be taken back, the assertion itself is not at fault (Kvanvig 2009, 148).

Here is, however, some reason to doubt that Kvanvig's distinction works; speech act literature[73] notably distinguishes between the content of a speech act and the illocutionary force by which the content is being put forward. One can perform various speech acts upon p: one can ask whether p, promise that p, threaten that p etc. In the case of assertion, by uttering p the speaker presents p as true.

Given this, a *proposition* is itself communicatively inert; that is to say that to actually perform a speech act, one has to put forth a proposition with an *illocutionary force,* such as assertion, promise, command, etc.

But if the propositional content is inert in isolation, it is less clear how Kvanvig envisages one being able to take it back in isolation. To see this, notice that assertion, as opposed to other types of actions – say, having vacationed in Hawaii – can be 'taken back'. Not in the sense that one can change the past as to not have had asserted in the first place, of course. Rather, taking back an assertion that p refers to no longer standing behind the commitments implied by having asserted that p. Now, p itself, in isolation, does not imply any commitments whatsoever. That is, depending on which illocutionary force we will act upon it with, different commitments will follow. If I promise that p, for instance, I commit myself to a future course of action; if I assert that p, I commit myself to, at least, it being the case that p.

If that is the case, it becomes clear that in order to take an assertion back, that is, to be released from the commitments implied by it, it has to be the case that I take back everything, force and content. I cannot only take back the content p, because p in isolation does not commit me to anything, inasmuch as I do not present it as true, or command p, or promise p, etc. Also, I cannot only take the action back either, because presenting nothing as true, or promising nothing also fails to imply any commitments on my part.

[73]See, e.g. (Green 2015).

So the only way in which one can take an assertion back is by not standing behind the commitments implied by the whole compound: having presented p as true.

Something is, indeed, different between the two cases presented by Kvanvig, though. Recall that, according to the normative framework put forth above, an agent needs be *blamelessly* ignorant that φ-ing violates N. The speakers in FAKE SNOW and FAKE BARNS, asserting on justified belief, are epistemically blameless, both directly and indirectly. They both assert from what they mistakenly take to be knowledge, and they seem to have conformed to their epistemic duties in forming the respective beliefs. After all, perception is a pretty reliable way to go about forming beliefs. In contrast, notice that Billy Bob's belief formation process, as Sue rightly points out, does not stand very tall when it comes to reliability. So, indeed, Billy Bob is indirectly blameworthy, as he failed to conform to his epistemic duties before proceeding, which led to him being in breach of the norm.

However, the KNA-Nec objector might still maintain that that's not all there is to it; that is, that all this does not go all the way in showing that the phenomenon of taking back one's speech act when finding out one has been mistaken or Gettiered supports KNA-Nec. The thought would go along the following lines: there seems to still be sense to the thought that some of the acts we take back were perfectly proper. Imagine I promise to come to your party. Plausibly enough, there's some norm of promising to the effect that you should only promise to do something you have good reason to think you will be able to do. Now say I can't come to your party, because of an entirely unforeseen event. It makes sense to say that, even though I ask to be released from the commitment to come, my original act of promising was perfectly proper. I need not apologise for having promised, or regret having promised. Why? Because I didn't do anything wrong. Why can't we say something parallel about assertion? When it turns out I was Gettiered, I 'take back' my assertion (act and content), but I need not apologise for having asserted, or feel any regret. Why? Because I didn't do anything wrong.

Notice, though, that all it is claimed here is that the taking back of speech acts is sufficient for asking to be released from the relevant commitments, not that it is necessary. That is, it is perfectly compatible with the claim made here that there will be instances of commitment release demand that do not amount to taking back the relevant speech act. What I will try to briefly argue next is that this is what is going on in the case above.

Note there is a clear disanalogy between the party case and the Gettiered assertion case. That is, by stipulation, in the party case my

reason for promising to come, while still standing, gets overridden[74] by unforeseen, more pressing considerations; in contrast, Wendy's reason to assert in the first place gets undercut by the information that she is in Fake Barn County.

To see how this makes a difference, consider another speech act, that of agreeing to marry someone. If I agree to marry you because I think you love me, and it turns out you don't, I will most likely take my speech act back and thereby ask to be released from my commitment. In contrast, if after twenty happy years of marriage we are not getting along very well anymore, and I ask for a divorce, I am asking to be released from my commitments without taking my initial speech act back; surely, if we had a perfectly fine marriage for twenty years, it is hardly appropriate or necessary for me to take back my having agreed to marry you to begin with, rather than merely ask to be released from my commitments now.

Returning to the assertion/party cases, say my reason to promise to come to the party was a known fact: I knew that my partner wanted to go. Say that later on, however, something unforeseen came up at my office, and it turns out I have to work late and finish a project that evening. As such, while my initial reason is still in good standing, it has just been overridden by more pressing considerations. It looks as if, in this case, there is no reason for me to take back my initial speech act, rather than merely demand to be released from the commitment implied by it. That is, it would sound inappropriate if I were to tell you something along the lines of 'I take it back, I should not have promised to come when I did'. Rather, merely letting you know that I will not be coming after all, due to unforeseen events, seems more suited to the situation.

In contrast, in the Gettier case, when I point out to Wendy that there is no way in which she can know that there is a barn over there, since we are in Fake Barn County, her initial reason to believe the asserted proposition gets undercut, which makes taking back the speech act the appropriate move. To see this, here is how an assertion case analogous to the party case would look like: I know there is an opening in my department, therefore I tell you: 'There is an opening in my department.' I therefore commit myself to this being the case. Now say that the very next day the position gets filled. Plausibly enough, when I tell you that there is no opening in my department anymore, I

[74] Again, I am not claiming that overriding is necessary for cases of commitment release demand without taking back the initial speech act; in general, it is beyond the ambition of this section to give a full account thereof. Rather, the thought is more to argue that KNA, through the normative picture put forth by this paper, can accommodate the target phenomena.

am not taking my initial assertion back – there was nothing wrong with it – but rather I am merely releasing myself from the commitment to there being an opening in my department, since that is not the case anymore.

4.3.4 A Posteriori Simplicity

Let us take stock: we have seen that, against Douven, RCNA does not immediately follow from principles that we are committed to on independent a priori grounds. As it turns out, for all Douven has proven, both the KNA and RCNA defender need a further argument for their preferred account of normativity of belief in order to get support from Douven's 'zeroth law of rationality'. So no advantage here on either side.

Further on, I have conceded that RCNA does a fair job in accounting for the unassertability of lottery propositions and for the practice of challenging assertions by means of 'How do you know?' questions. However, when it comes to Moorean statements, I have argued that, even if we accept Douven's argument for their unassertability, RCNA still fails to account for their paradoxical soundingness. So there's a big advantage on KNA's part on this front.

Last but not least, I have also offered a unified defence of KNA against 'blameless speakers' objections, by putting forth a framework for the normativity of assertion in line with the normativity of action in general, so as to escape charges with ad hoc-ness.

Now, the RCNA defender might still want to argue that her preferred account offers a simpler explanation of the cases put forth. Douven gives it a go. He argues that it seems simpler, and thus methodologically preferable, to explain our intuitions about false but reasonable assertions without having to appeal to an extra story about how one can breach rules blamelessly (2006: 478).

As much as one might value simplicity, however, the illustrations in the previous sections stand as pretty solid proof to the fact that, in this case, it might get us in trouble when it comes to empirical adequacy. Unless Douven provides us with a principled explanation regarding how assertion differs from other actions, simplicity would lead us to conclude that traffic norms are not, in fact, governing driving, just because I'm blameless for violating them due to my broken speedometer. Similarly, the simpler explanation for my not being blameworthy for breaking my promise to Ted, that is, that there is no rule obliging me to keep my promises, would not do either.

Here are two more reasons to resist this objection; first, it is not clear that the fact that KNA-Nec needs to account for the relationship

between propriety of action and blamelessness in order to explain the above cases speaks towards its lack of a posteriori simplicity. After all, recall that Douven himself tried to account for the a priori simplicity of RCNA by attempting to show that it follows from principles to which we are committed on independent grounds. Similarly, the defence put forth above follows from principles about the normativity of action to which we are committed on independent grounds. So, rather than speaking against KNA-Nec, the fact that it is coheres with an account of the normativity of assertion that follows from the normativity of action in general seems to speak in its favour.

Furthermore, one can easily imagine parallel cases against RCNA which will render the latter in need of a similar line of defence. Take, again, for instance, Williamson's (2000) TRAIN case: shouting 'That is your train!' upon seeing a train approach the station looks like the right thing to do, even though I do not know that it is your train, nor do I have knowledge-level justification for believing it; I merely believe that there's a fair chance that it is your train, and it's prudentially better for you to check it out. This is a case in which the prudential norm overrides whatever the epistemic norm says and renders me blameless and my assertion all-things-considered proper. Also, even if my assertion is both in breach of RCNA and improper on all other grounds, I might still be blameless for it, if, for instance, the reason why I assert without having any justification whatsoever is because I have been hit over the head with a bat. In fact, Douven (2006, 470) himself acknowledges that "we will need a story about breaching rules blamelessly anyway, regardless of what we are going to say is the rule of assertion". Thus, it does not look like RCNA fares better in what a posteriori simplicity is concerned either.

4.4 Conclusion

This chapter has argued that the knowledge norm of assertion scores better than the main competing account on the market when it comes to both empirical adequacy and simplicity. To this aim, I have first shown that Igor Douven's argument for the superiority of the rational credibility norm in terms of a priori simplicity does not go through. Further on, I have argued that RCNA, as opposed to KNA, is unable to explain the paradoxical flavour of Moorean statements.

I have also put forth a framework for criticisability in the case of assertion as part of a fairly uncontroversial normative framework for action in general, and argued that it helps to defuse several notable objections to KNA.

Chapter V
The Sufficiency Claim

We have seen that much discussion has focused on the necessity claim involved in KNA. While not enjoying the same degree of popularity, the claim that knowledge is also sufficient for epistemically proper assertion (KNA-Suff) has quite a few supporters too.[75] However, comparatively little discussion has focused on questioning KNA-Suff. Most notably, Jessica Brown (2010) has argued that, in high stakes contexts, one needs to find oneself in a stronger epistemic position vis-à-vis p in order to properly assert that p (henceforth, the *quantitative objection*). In recent work, Jennifer Lackey (2011, 2013, 2014) argues that that's not all there is to it. That is, Lackey argues that it's not only the *quantity* of epistemic support that might be at stake, but the *quality* too. More specifically, Lackey identifies cases in which it looks as if the *type* of source of one's knowledge that p might be defective in making it so that one can assert that p. Lackey argues that in some cases of expert testimony and testimony involving aesthetic judgements, isolated testimonial knowledge will not be enough to grant the speaker the right to assert (henceforth, the *qualitative objection*).

This chapter argues that the case against KNA-Suff rests on value-theoretic inaccuracies. It is argued that 1) the intuitive need for more than knowledge in Brown's high-stakes contexts does not come from the epistemic norm governing assertion, but from further (prudential, moral, etc.) norms stepping in and raising the bar, and 2) Lackey's purported quality-driven case against KNA-Suff boils down to a quantitative objection. As such, I will argue, Lackey fails to establish more than that some contexts require stronger epistemic support for assertion than others. If that is the case, Lackey's argument will be vulnerable to the same objections as Brown's.

5.1 The Quantitative Case

Again, what we are interested in is the *epistemic* norm governing assertion; that is, we want to know, roughly, how much warrant is enough for an assertion that enjoys it to be epistemically proper. Let us then formulate the claim that knowledge is sufficient for epistemically proper assertion as follows:

[75]E.g. Keith DeRose (2002), Simion (2015) and, more tentatively, John Hawthorne (2004).

KNA-Suff: One's assertion that p is epistemically proper if one knows that p.

At first glance, KNA-Suff looks fairly promising. It looks as if it's perfectly fine for me, for instance, to tell you that there's a desk in front of me while I'm writing this paper; the reason why I can do that without rendering myself subject to criticism is because I know there's a desk in front of me, via perception. If you were to question my assertion, appealing to my knowledge would adequately meet the challenge.

According to Jessica Brown, however, knowledge is not always enough; that is, in high stakes scenarios, more epistemic support is needed for permissible assertion. Consider the following case:

AFFAIR: A husband is berating his friend for not telling him that his wife has been having an affair even though the friend has known of the affair for weeks.
Husband: Why didn't you say she was having an affair? You've known for weeks.
Friend: Ok, I admit I knew, but it wouldn't have been right for me to say anything before I was absolutely sure. I knew the damage it would cause to your marriage (Brown 2010, 555).

Intuitively, we find Friend is right on this one; that is, he's right to not have hastened into telling Husband about the affair before he was absolutely sure. One should definitely not rush into giving this kind of news. As such, Brown takes this case to show that, in high stakes situations, knowledge[76] is not enough; one needs to find oneself in a stronger epistemic position vis-à-vis p in order to properly assert that p. Furthermore, Brown takes the sufficiency claim of the epistemic norm we are talking about to come in the following formulation:

KNA-Suff-Brown (KNASB): One is in a good enough epistemic position to assert p if one knows that p (2010, 550).

Importantly, in the light of all this, Brown takes KNASB to be equivalent to our previous formulation of KNA-Suff:

[76] Note that Brown's case, as it stands, is somehow under-described; that is, it is not at all clear what could ground Friend's belief in the affair such that it would intuitively amount to knowledge, but fall short of assertability. Seeing the couple in a fugitive embrace? Seems to fall short of being enough for knowledge. On the other hand, it looks as if anything more than that would come close to providing enough epistemic support for assertability. For my purposes here, however, I will take it that there is a way to fill out the case such that it ends up doing the intended work.

> So, one might instead phrase the sufficiency claim as the claim that *if one knows that p, then one is in a good enough epistemic position to assert that p* (emphasis added). This leaves it open that one's assertion is incorrect on grounds other than epistemic ones, for instance, that it's rude, imprudent or irrelevant etc. It merely claims that, *if one knows that p, then there is nothing epistemically wrong with asserting that p* (emphasis added) (2010, 550).

Thus, Brown stands behind the following equivalence thesis:

KNASB - KNA-Suff Equivalence Thesis (ET): One is in a good enough epistemic position to assert that p if and only if one's assertion that p is epistemically proper.

Further on, Brown finds KNASB to be false, as proven by AFFAIR; Friend does know that the wife is having an affair, but, intuitively, he is still not in a good enough epistemic position to assert it. If that is the case, naturally, in virtue of ET, she concludes KNA-Suff is also false; knowledge is not always enough for epistemically proper assertion.

I believe Brown is right to think that KNASB is false; the epistemic position a knowledgeable asserter finds himself in might not be, all-things-considered, good enough for asserting that p. However, I will also show that ET is false, which will render KNA-Suff unaffected by Brown's argument. Inasmuch as what we care about is *epistemic* propriety – that is, propriety by the epistemic norm – rather than all-things-considered propriety, for all Brown has shown, KNA-Suff stands.

Recall that, in Chapter #1, we have seen that content individuation (CIT) for epistemic norms fails: just because a norm N affects the amount of epistemic support needed for permissible φ-ing, it need not follow that N is an epistemic norm. Given this, it looks as though it is on Brown's shoulders to argue that the norm asking for stronger epistemic support in AFFAIR is not only a norm with epistemic content, but also an epistemic norm as such, associated with an epistemic goal, and concerned with epistemic propriety. By the looks of the case, one might find it more plausible that it is a prudential constraint that asks for a stronger epistemic support here, directed at the prudential goal of protecting Husband from unnecessary hardship,

and thus concerned with prudential propriety[77]. Actually, the way in which the case is put forth suggests as much; recall Friend's excuse: "Ok, I admit I knew, but it wouldn't have been right for me to say anything before I was absolutely sure. *I knew the damage it would cause to your marriage* (emphasis added)" (Brown 2010, 555). As Aidan McGlynn (2014) rightly points out, "[t]his builds into the case that one is worried about the effect one's assertion would have on one's friend's marriage, which is surely a non-epistemic factor". Furthermore, McGlynn argues, "[…] if the impropriety that would be involved in asserting in this case would really be epistemic, rather than due to the presence of non-epistemic factors, we would expect that a qualified assertion might be appropriate". However, it looks as if hedging will not deliver propriety either. For instance, surely, given that Friend knows the wife is having an affair, he has enough warrant to be pretty sure that she *might* be having an affair. Still, it still looks like Friend would better abstain from asserting the latter in the presence of Husband also (2014, 126). This also suggest that prudential considerations are, in fact, at play.

In the light of all this, let us now move on to checking the plausibility of Brown's Equivalence Thesis. Notice that, if CIT fails, ET turns out to be false too. One's assertion that p can be epistemically proper without it being the case that one is in a (all-things-considered) good enough epistemic position to assert that p. This is going to be the case when the norm that dictates how much warrant is needed for all-things-considered proper assertion is not the epistemic norm, but a further norm – with epistemic content – stepping in and raising the bar, like in AFFAIR.

Also, one can be in a (all-things-considered) good enough epistemic position to assert that p without it being the case that one's assertion that p is epistemically proper. This is going to be the case when further norms step in, override the epistemic norm[78], and set the

[77] One way for Brown to argue that it is for the sake of reaching an epistemic goal that more warrant is needed in this case could go along the following lines: Friend's assertion is aimed at generating knowledge/true belief in his audience – in this case, Husband. If Friend were to assert 'Your wife is having an affair', Husband might plausibly ask 'How do you know?' In this case, Husband might fail to believe the content of Friend's assertion if the latter is not able to back his claims by serious epistemic support. If Friend fails to generate belief in his audience, he also thereby fails to generate knowledge, or true belief, for that matter, so he fails to reach his epistemic goal. See Section #6.2.3 below for an argument aimed to show that this reply is bound to fail.

[78] In this case, KNA-Nec. Notice also that no one in the literature questions the prudential explanation in the TRAIN case. However, TRAIN is for KNA-Nec what AFFAIR is for KNA-Suff: a case in which the quantity of epistemic warrant needed for prudentially proper assertion is not the same as the one needed for epistemically

threshold for (again, all-things-considered) good enough warrant lower than the epistemic norm. One example of this is, again, Williamson's TRAIN case.

To sum up: once we make the necessary distinction between epistemic norms and norms with epistemic content, Brown's ET turns out to be false. If this is the case, her argument against KNASB in no way affects KNA-Suff, which is the epistemic norm we were interested in to begin with.

5.2 The Qualitative Case

We have seen that the quantitative case against KNA-Suff did not stand up to close value-theoretic scrutiny. That is, we have seen that further norms – like prudential and moral norms – can override the epistemic norm and raise the quantity of epistemic support needed for all-things-considered proper assertion.

Jennifer Lackey (2011, 2013, 2014), however, argues that the quantity of epistemic support is not all there is to it. That is, according to Lackey, the *type* of epistemic support might be problematic for permissible assertion by knowledgeable speakers also; in some contexts, Lackey argues, mere isolated testimonial knowledge is not enough for permissible assertion. Consider the following case:

DOCTOR: Matilda is an oncologist at a teaching hospital […]. One of her patients, Derek, […] has been experiencing intense abdominal pain […]. After requesting an ultrasound and MRI, the results of the tests arrived on Matilda's day off [and were] reviewed by Nancy, a competent medical student in oncology training at her hospital. […] Nancy communicated to Matilda simply that her diagnosis is pancreatic cancer, without offering any of the details of the test results […]. Shortly thereafter, Matilda had her appointment with Derek, where she truly asserts to him purely on the basis of Nancy's reliable testimony, "I am very sorry to tell you this, but you have pancreatic cancer" (Lackey 2011, 254).

Matilda, Lackey argues, knows that Derek has cancer. After all, her belief is true, reliably produced and, furthermore, internally well grounded – Matilda has good reasons to trust Nancy's assessment of the

proper assertion. It is, therefore, surprising that AFFAIR is seen as problematic for KNA-Suff, while TRAIN is widely acknowledged to not put any pressure on KNA-Nec.

situation. As such, knowledge would be granted on any standard view of testimony (Lackey 2013, 36).

In spite of this, though, intuitively, Matilda's assertion is inappropriate. According to Lackey, this is due to the joint action of two factors: the purely testimonial source – what Lackey dubs second-hand knowledge – and the isolated character of the piece of knowledge – the asserter knowing nothing other than p about the subject matter.

Also, Lackey argues, just one of the two factors would not be enough to trigger the intuition; had Nancy given Matilda more information about the test results (non-isolation), or had Matilda, say, seen the result of at least only one isolated test herself (not entirely second-hand knowledge), her assertion would have been just fine.

Now, crucially, recall that Lackey claims that the source of the felt inappropriateness of the assertion in DOCTOR is a qualitative, rather than a quantitative one.

Notice, however, that it is not clear that isolation – that is, only possessing one item of knowledge about the subject matter – would not do the trick and render the assertion inappropriate itself. Telling a patient that he has cancer solely on the basis of one isolated test result looks a bit rushed. Surely, given the high stakes involved, we expect our doctors to have solid evidence before presenting us with such shocking news. Actually, the practice itself consists in not only seeing more results pointing in the same direction, but also having the tests redone at least once more for confirmation before informing the patient. But if that is the case, it looks as if it is quantity rather than quality of epistemic support at play here.

Second, it is also less than clear that non-isolated second-hand knowledge would always be as proper of a source for assertion as Lackey would have it.[79] Of course, if Nancy spends quite a lot of time over the phone with Matilda and tells her everything about the test results in question, which would enable Matilda to draw her own expert conclusion about the case, it might seem fine for Matilda to tell Derek that he has cancer. However, it looks as if the propriety of Matilda's assertion will be directly proportional to the amount of information she gets. Surely, if in addition to the fact that Derek has cancer, due to time limitations, Nancy only gets to tell Matilda that the ultrasound shows a grey shadow on Derek's pancreas, this will hardly enable Matilda to break the news to Derek. More seems to be needed. But, again, it looks as if the quantity of epistemic support is what does the trick, rather than its quality.

[79] Lackey (2013, 40) acknowledges that the purely testimonial source is enough to trigger unassertability.

And, last but not least, consider what would be the case if the source of Matilda's isolated second-hand knowledge would not be Nancy, but rather Matilda's boss, Dr. Jones, the chief physician of the oncology ward. Surely, then, Matilda's assertion would be perfectly warranted. But, again, this suggests that it is not the nature of the source – that is, its being isolated and second-hand – that does the trick here, but its reliability. Dr. Jones is just a more reliable source than Nancy is. And while the testimony of both of them seems good enough for Matilda to gain knowledge, in the high-stakes scenario we're facing, Dr. Jones's testimony would appropriately raise the quantity of epistemic support to what is required for all-things-considered proper assertion.

In a similar line, it is also worth noticing that, in high stakes situations, it might be the case that even non-isolated first-hand knowledge would not be enough for assertion. That is, plausibly enough, telling Derek that he has cancer only on the basis of two blood test results, even if Matilda saw the results herself, would hardly make for a proper assertion, given the high stakes involved.[80]

Consider, though, another type of case that, according to Lackey, sheds doubt on the sufficiency thesis:

FOOD: My neighbour Ken is a connoisseur of fine dining. As we were leaving Starbucks this afternoon, he told me that the food at a new local restaurant about which I was previously quite unfamiliar, Quince, is exquisite, though being in a hurry prevented him from offering any details or evidence on behalf of this claim. While talking to my friend Vivienne later in the day, she was fretting over where to take her boyfriend to dinner for Valentine's Day. I promptly relieved her stress by truly asserting, "The food at Quince is exquisite" (Lackey 2011, 260).

Again, Lackey argues that what explains the inappropriateness intuition for the assertion in this case is the joint action of isolation and second-handedness.

Lackey's case affords a simple Gricean way out, though. Notice that there are three different things one might mean when making an assertion involving an aesthetic judgement. By uttering:

'The food is exquisite at Quince's',

[80] For a similar project but a quite different objection to Lackey's expert testimony cases see Benton (2014). Although Benton's case against Lackey goes along quite dissimilar lines to the one made by this paper, Benton too seems to be sympathetic to the idea of further norms stepping in due to the high-stakes institutional contexts. See, for instance, footnote 12, p. 9. For Lackey's reply to Benton's objections, see Lackey (2014).

I might mean to say that I have tried it and I like it, or that it is generally considered good food (by experts, or most people, etc.), or both. However, the most common implicatures are the first and the third on the list. To see this, notice that if I want to say that experts consider it good but I don't like it, or I haven't tried it, I will not merely say 'The food is good', but qualify my statement accordingly.

As such, it is easy to see how making assertions involving aesthetic judgements based on solely second-hand knowledge is less than appropriate, unless, of course, I cancel the implicature and make it clear that it is according to experts, or most people, that the food is good, even though I haven't tried it myself.

One could, of course, argue that just because a Gricean explanation of the intuitive unassertability is available, that does not mean that KNA-Suff is safe. Carter and Gordon (2011) choose this line of defence; they argue that, plausibly, in this case, the Gricean maxim has been broken *due* to epistemic shortcomings:

> A natural way for this to happen in everyday discourse will be when someone misleads someone else (thus violating the Gricean norm not to mislead) specifically by implying that they have greater epistemic warrant for their assertions than they actually do (Carter and Gordon 2011, 625).

I agree with Carter and Gordon on this; I think that this is exactly the right diagnosis when it comes to the situation at hand. However, this fails to constitute a problem for KNA-Suff, as the relevant broken norm is KNA-Nec,[81] the corresponding necessity claim. After all, all I come to know by testimony in the above case is that my friend likes the food, or, at most, that it is considered good by experts in the field; this, of course, might increase the chances of my liking it too. But I surely do not, in any way, come to *know that I like* the food myself.[82] So the implicature to the effect that I like it will, of course, render my assertion improper, not because knowledge is not sufficient for assertion, but because it is necessary.[83]

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[81] Weaker norms are broken too: e.g. the speaker is not even justified in believing the implicature.

[82] For further support for this claim, see McGlynn (2014, 128).

[83] For an argument against the claim that one has to know the conversational implicatures of one's assertions, see Elisabeth Fricker (2012); while I find Fricker's argument successful, I think that the case this paper is making is not affected by it. Roughly, Fricker takes it that we might not be able to hold the speaker responsible for lack of warrant for the generated conversational implicatures, because in many contexts it is not clear whether the hearer gets the implicature right. However, importantly, Fricker's argument only targets (and, arguably, only goes through for)

What would help with the propriety of the assertion would be if the case stipulated that Ken and I share the exact same taste in food. The implicature thus generated would not be problematic anymore. But that, of course, would be due to the fact that, in these cases, I would come to know that I like the food myself.

So, in sum, it seems that in order to turn my assertion into an appropriate one, we have to re-describe the case so that I either 1. know that I like the food myself, or 2. cancel the implicature to this effect. But this goes to show that the underlying problem is not that knowledge is not sufficient for proper assertion, but simply that in the original case I assert to more than I actually know, and thereby I break KNA-Nec.

5.3 Objections and Replies

Objection 1: Lackey considers a possible reply along Gricean lines, but she argues that it would not stand, as, by Grice's own lights, implicatures are "not carried by what is said, but only by the saying of what is said, or by '*putting it that way*'" (Lackey 2011, 270). In contrast to this, in the discussed cases of aesthetic judgements, it looks as if the impropriety is linked to the content of the assertion rather than to uttering it in one context or another.

Reply. Grice (1989, 25, 37, 39) distinguishes between three types of implicatures:

1. Conversational implicatures (cancellable, and to which the quote above refers to): carried by uttering p in a specific context rather than by p itself, like in:

'Are you going to Paul's party?'

'I have to work.' (Implicature: I am not going to Paul's party.)

2. Conventional implicatures (non-cancellable): carried by the meaning of the sentence itself, like in:

'He is an Englishman; he is, therefore, brave.' (Implicature: His being an Englishman implies that he is brave.)

3. Generalized implicatures (cancellable): carried by the meaning with which the sentence is conventionally (usually) uttered:

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mere conversational implicatures. The ones this paper is concerned with are *conventional* conversational implicatures, that is, carried by the meaning with which the sentence is *conventionally* (usually) uttered (more about this below). Roughly put, it looks as if, if a sentence is *conventionally* uttered with a particular meaning, the hearer is in a better position to get the implicature right, and therefore in a better position to criticize the speaker for lack of warrant.

'Some athletes smoke.' (Implicature: Not all athletes smoke.)

It is easy to see that assertions involving aesthetic judgements pertain to the third category. That is, the implicature is 1. carried by the meaning conventionally associated with uttering a sentence of the type 'X is good', and 2. cancellable.

Objection 2: Lackey argues that one can easily imagine cases when the presumed implicature is not cancellable. To this effect, she illustrates with a case she dubs the 'presumed witness'[84] scenario:[85]

RECOMMENDATION: Josie, who was asked to support a philosophy student applying to Ph.D. programs, wrote in her letter of recommendation for his applications, "Mitchell has very polished writing skills." While Josie does indeed know this about the student, her knowledge is grounded purely in the isolated, reliable testimony of her trustworthy colleague. Josie herself has had Mitchell in class for only a few weeks, and has yet to see any of his writing (Lackey 2011, 264).

Reply: In the light of the discussion in the two previous sections, it might have become transparent already that RECOMMENDATION is but a combination of the above: an aesthetic judgement offered in an institutional context defined by particular stakes. In virtue of being an aesthetic judgement alone, the assertion will be inappropriate due to generating the false implicature that Josie likes the student's writing style herself (and thus inappropriate due to being in breach of KNA-Nec). Interestingly enough, though, what happens in this particular case of aesthetic judgement is that Josie cannot even properly cancel the implicature, due to the institutional requirements that specifically ask for Josie's own aesthetic judgement on the matter.

Notice, however, that this, again, fails to speak against KNA-Suff. The institution of writing recommendation letters is so designed as to involve the writer's aesthetic judgements, if any, because it is her

[84] Notice the Gricean flavour here.

[85] Lackey (2011, 2013) brings two further cases in support of her view: a case involving someone's second-hand knowledge that a student cheated in an exam, and a case of moral testimony. In both cases, Lackey takes it that the subjects (i) have the relevant piece of knowledge from testimony, and (ii) still fail to be in a position to make epistemically proper assertions.

Arguably though, both cases fall short of fully driving the point home; the former case fails to trigger a clear unassertability intuition, while the claim to knowledge acquisition in the latter case is disputed in the relevant literature; as such, for the purposes of this paper, I decided to focus on the less controversial cases. For a very convincing case against Lackey's claim (ii) for the cheating student scenario, see McGlynn (2014, 128). For problems with claim (i) for the moral testimony case, see Lackey's (2013, 33) overview of the relevant literature.

reputation that's at stake. Josie's addressee wants to know what Josie, the author of the letter, thinks about the student's writing style. Had Josie testified to something not involving an aesthetic judgement in her letter – say, the fact that Mitchell is a student representative the faculty's committee for gender issues – isolated second-hand knowledge would have been just fine.

To see that non-cancellability is due to institutional norms stepping in, rather than to the epistemic norm we are interested in, notice the difference with testifying in court. In these cases, even testimony based on second-hand knowledge about non-aesthetic matters of fact will be problematic – and, conversely, the implicature will be non-cancellable –, due to the fact that this is just how the institution is designed to work.

Objection 3. Lackey considers a possible appeal to institutional norms stepping in (crediting it to Sandy Goldberg), but she argues that "assertions involving isolated second-hand knowledge are not epistemically problematic because various institutions say that they are wrong; rather, the institutions say that they are wrong because such assertions are epistemically problematic" (Lackey 2011, 274). In line with Lackey, Carter and Gordon (2011) also argue that " 'passing-the-buck' of criticism to the violation of some social role will only lead to having the buck passed right back to the epistemic shortcomings of the asserter who occupies such a role. This is because […] the relevant order of explanation is backwards" (2011, 624).

Reply. Notice, first, that this paper does not explain the impropriety of the target assertions in terms of institutional norms, but the un-cancellability of the generated implicature.

That being said, I trust that Lackey is right on the order of explanation here. Notice, however, that this suggests a quantitative picture again. Plausibly enough, we designed the institutions in line with the stakes usually implied by their target concern. When the institution is in charge with informing you that you have cancer, its representatives should better be sure about it before proceeding. Journalism students are taught to corroborate information from at least three sources before publishing a piece of news, given the large-scale impact it might have. In the case of writing recommendation letters, too, both the reputation of the writer and the student's career are at stake.

In contrast, isolated testimonial knowledge from an average source is surely pretty fine for the purpose of assertion in many low

stakes environments, like, say, companies providing cleaning services. I doubt that any such service provider would have to double check before telling me that my house has been cleaned, rather than just trusting the word of her employee.

So it looks as if, again, we are just faced with a quantitative issue here; that is, the reliability of the source being in line with the stakes. If that is the case, if Lackey's argument eventually boils down to a quantitative objection, her case is open to the same worries as Brown's.

5.4 Conclusion

This chapter has argued that Brown's quantitative worries regarding the amount of epistemic support needed for proper assertion in high-stakes contexts need not concern the epistemic norm of assertion itself.

I have also provided a quantitative explanation of Jennifer Lackey's cases. Lackey thinks that isolated second-hand knowledge will not always warrant assertion. I have argued that in her 'expert testimony' cases, isolated second-hand knowledge from a very reliable source warrants assertion, which suggests that what is at play is quantity (related to the high stakes of the featured context) rather than quality of support. I have then looked at Lackey's cases involving aesthetic judgements and argued that they afford a straightforward Gricean explanation, and thus pose no problem for the sufficiency claim we are interested in.

Chapter 6.
The Scoreboard

It's time to take stock: this thesis has identified a widely assumed dilemma when it comes to accounting for the intuitive variability of proper assertion with practical stakes: it is commonly thought that one can either hold that knowledge is the norm of proper assertion and be a sensitivist about knowledge, or abandon KNA in favour of a context sensitive standard for proper assertability in order to remain under a Classical Invariantist umbrella (what I have dubbed the Shiftiness Dilemma). I have argued that the Shiftiness Dilemma is a false dilemma, resting on an unmotivated normative assumption, i.e. the assumption that the felt variation in assertability with stakes is epistemic in nature (ESA). Further on, I have shown how, as soon as we give up this assumption, Classical Invariantism is perfectly compatible with KNA and put forth an independently motivated account that illustrates this. Furthermore, I have defended both the necessity and the sufficiency claim involved in KNA against the extant putative counterexamples.

At this point, crucially, I still owe one thing to the reader: I need to provide reason to believe my account is preferable over counter candidate explanations of the contextualist data. After all, for all that has been said here, any empirically adequate alternative account, also enjoying some plausible independent motivation, will be just as good. This chapter attempts to rectify this situation; it argues that the account defended here deals better than the main competitors with the data at hand.

In order to do that, I first have a very brief look at knowledge sensitivism and identify two ways in which Classical Invariantism is the preferable position when it comes to dealing with the normativity of assertion.

Given that, and given that I take invariantism to have the advantage of being the default position anyway, I spend the rest of the chapter discussing competing classical invariantist views at length. First, I look at assertion sensitivism and argue that it conflicts with several fairly uncontroversial value theoretic assumptions; this, I argue, renders my account the preferable option on prior plausibility.

Last but not least, I discuss the main classical invariantist knowledge norm-friendly explanation of the contextualist data available on the market - what I dub 'the KK strategy.'

6.1 Knowledge Sensitivism

Recall that both Knowledge Sensitivism (SK) and Assertion Sensitivism (SA) aim to capture the Shiftiness Intuition, i.e. the intuitive stakes sensitivity of proper assertability. Both accounts take it, contra the view defended by this thesis, that the felt variation concerns epistemic propriety. Recall, also, that, for all that has been said so far in this thesis, the SK, SA and KNA explanations of the data are on a par. Now, if that is the case, bringing in theoretical considerations is the way forward in settling the issue. In what follows, I will try to do just that; I will point to some theoretical advantages that speak in favour of my view over sensitivism of both sorts.

Let us begin with Knowledge Sensitivism. Recall that this view keeps the epistemic standard for proper assertion fixed – usually knowledge – and argues that the degree of warrant necessary for attributing/meeting it varies with practical context. Several positions defended in the literature belong here: contextualists claim that features of the attributor's context affect the truth-conditions of knowledge ascriptions (e.g. DeRose 2002), while champions of pragmatic encroachment argue that having knowledge itself is affected by the subject's practical situation (e.g. Hawthorne 2004).

According to champions of SK, due to change in practical context, as opposed to ASPIRIN 1, in ASPIRIN 2 one fails to know the target proposition and, therefore, is not in a position to assert it.

Now, crucially, note that according to contextualists themselves, invariantism is the default position; we need to be argued out of it: "we seem, if anything, to be 'intuitive invariantists'". According to Stewart Cohen (1999, 78), for instance, "many resist [the contextualist] thesis — some fiercely. Moreover, those who do accept the thesis, generally do so only as a result of being convinced by philosophical reflection".

Considerable amounts of ink have been spilled on pointing out theoretical and empirical difficulties for both contextualism and pragmatic encroachment.[86] I will not rehearse these arguments here, in the interest of space. Also, I take it that, since the central concern of this thesis is with the normativity of assertion, out of the two sensitivist theories, it makes sense to focus the discussion on the one that actually proposes a competing norm for this speech act, i.e. assertion sensitivism.

What I will do, then, is only discuss two problems for knowledge sensitivism which speak in favour of combining a knowledge norm with

[86] For a nice overview, see e.g. Rysiew (2016).

a classical invariantist account in general, and, in particular, favour the account defended in this thesis.

6.1.1 Two for Invariantism

1. The 'Whose Stakes? Dilemma': Recall that we have identified two positions under the knowledge sensitivist umbrella: contextualism about knowledge attributions and pragmatic encroachment. For the former, the relevant stakes are those of the attributor, while for the latter, the subject's practical interest is what makes the difference. Now, as it so happens, the question regarding whose stakes matter will quickly lead SK into what I will call the *'Whose Stakes? Dilemma'*: if shiftiness depends on attributor's stakes, the view notably divorces what it is to know from what it is to properly assert; (e.g. Hawthorne 2004). That is because, while the relevant stakes for knowledge attribution will be those of the attributor, the relevant stakes for proper assertability will lie with the subject.

To see why this is unfortunate, note that this puts the contextualist in the awkward position to have to accept statements of the form: 'Louise knows that p. KNA is true and so if Louise knows that p, she may (epistemically) assert that p. However, Louise ought (epistemically) not assert that p'.

On the other hand, if what matters are the stakes associated with the subject, SK fails to account for the independently plausible function of assertion of generating testimonial knowledge. After all, if the two parties, hearer and speaker, do not share stakes, knowledge transmission can fail. This will happen in cases where the stakes of the hearer are higher than those of the speaker. Whenever that is the case, the corresponding assertions, although epistemically proper, will fail to fulfil their epistemic function, in spite of the otherwise friendly environment. Furthermore, this difficulty also comes with an important theoretical burden on the shoulders of the SK defender: misfit with all extant accounts of testimonial knowledge, according to which whether knowledge gets generated by testimony is independent of pragmatic factors.[87]

Now, one move in the direction of escaping the stakes dilemma that, at least at first glance, looks fairly promising, is the more recent contextualist suggestion that it's the conversational purpose which determines whose stakes are relevant and this can vary between the attributer and the subject. John Greco (2010), for instance, has notably

[87] See Lackey (2008) for an overview.

defended a very flexible view on which even the interests of a third party can be the ones that matter. Will this kind of manoeuvre help the contextualist here? Alas, the answer is 'no'. Here is why: think of DeRose in the high stakes bank case again: everything stays fixed, except that, after DeRose denies knowledge to himself, his wife asks: 'How about calling Stew? He also has an account here, maybe he knows whether the bank is open on Saturdays". Now, say that, as matter of fact, Stew has the exact same warrant as DeRose to believe that the bank is open on Saturdays: he's been there two weeks ago. Say, also, that DeRose is aware of this. It looks as though, then, the natural thing to answer would be 'No, he doesn't know either'. Given the purpose of the conversation, the stakes are definitely high. But now imagine that, at the same time, Stew is in a low stakes bank case. Surely, it is perfectly fine for him to assert that the bank will be open on Saturday. Again, the contextualist divorces knowledge attribution from assertability.

2. Parsimony: SK champions are in need of explanations involving overriding norms anyway, for explaining further data. Given this, the account defended here is the most parsimonious.

First, in situations in which the stakes of the hearer are higher, 1) pragmatic encroachment needs to employ some explanation involving overriding anyway, in order to account for impropriety, while 2) the explanation offered by contextualism does not seem to stand up to further linguistic scrutiny. To see this, take Jessica Brown's AFFAIR case again; let us start with champions of pragmatic encroachment; first of all, what these philosophers will have to say about this case is that, given his low stakes, Friend does indeed know, and is therefore in a perfectly fine position to assert. If you are still not convinced, imagine a variation of the case where the knowledgeable individual is but an indifferent neighbour. Still, even so, it looks as if she should not assert it to poor Husband's face for want of sufficiently strong evidence.

Now, according to the functionalist picture I have put forth, this is but a straightforward case where the prudential function takes precedence over the epistemic one. Of course, there is nothing keeping pragmatic encroachers from explaining this case in a similar way. Note, however, that insofar as an account of overriding is employed anyway, it is not clear why we should not prefer a uniform, independently motivated picture like the one proposed here. After all, the alternative is a mixed account that still owes us an explanation as to why some of the cases put forth are cases of overriding, while others are cases where practical stakes affect whether you know.

Let us then move on to contextualism. According to this view, what is going on in AFFAIR is that the relevant context to measure the

propriety of Friend's assertion against is one that is also partly 'infected' by Husband's stakes, which explains the epistemic impropriety of the assertion.

Recall, though, that *contra* contextualism, my explanation in terms of prudential considerations stepping in and overriding the epistemic ones seems to also be supported by further linguistic considerations: surely, […] Friend […] has enough warrant to be pretty sure that she *might* be having an affair. Still, it still looks like Friend would better abstain from asserting the latter in the presence of Husband also (McGlynn 2014, 126).

Furthermore, second, SK champions will also be unable to explain urgency situations without appealing to overriding. Here is why: note that, roughly speaking, SK offers a directly proportional scheme for the association between stakes and knowledge/assertability. That is, the higher the stakes, the more warrant seems to be needed according to these views for knowledge, and therefore assertability, to be in place. Think, however, of Williamson's TRAIN case: here, the relationship between stakes/urgency and assertability seems to work the other way around, that is, it looks as if assertability varies inversely proportionally with stakes/urgency. The more urgent it is for you to get to your destination, the lower the amount of warrant I need for making the corresponding assertion.

As far as I can see, there is nothing in the SK scheme that enables them to explain this phenomenon. As such, again, it looks as if they will need an explanation in terms of overriding here and so are bound to sacrifice on two counts: parsimony and the general motivation for the view.

6.2 WAMs

For several people who like classical invariantism about knowledge attributions, the move from variation in assertability with stakes to contextualism or pragmatic encroachment seems rushed. As such, these authors venture to account for the Shiftiness Intuition under a classical invariantist umbrella by arguing for the context-sensitivity of proper assertability. This move has become known in the literature as a Warranted Assertability Maneuver, or WAM for short.

Now, there are two extant ways of being a WAM-er: one can, on the one hand, hold the epistemic norm of assertion fixed – say, defend KNA – and argue that the source of variability pertains to what is pragmatically conveyed by the assertion in question rather than by

what is, strictly speaking, said (e.g. Rysiew (2001), Brown (2006)). According to this view, in DeRose's high stakes bank case, for instance, DeRose does, in fact, know that the bank will be open on Saturday. However, given the presumption of relevance, saying that he knows pragmatically conveys that he is able to exclude all the counter-possibilities salient at the context – like, for instance, the possibility of the bank having changed its hours. That, of course, would be false; this, according to the defenders of this line, is the source of the unassertability intuition in high stakes scenarios. Let us call this view a Pragmatic WAM.

Alternatively, one can go for an epistemic WAM. The thought is, roughly, to explain the intuitive variability in propriety from one ASPIRIN case to the other by keeping the standards for knowledge fixed, and allowing that the degree of warrant for epistemically proper assertion varies with context (henceforth Assertion Sensitivism, or SA).[88]

In this respect, thus, according to SA, although the speaker's epistemic status remains unchanged in the two ASPIRIN cases, the assertion 'I have aspirin at home' would not be epistemically proper in ASPIRIN 2 due to change in the relevant contextual features,[89] most likely related to the relevant stakes. That is, while the speaker does know that he has aspirin at home in both ASPIRIN 1 and ASPIRIN 2, due to changes in context, it is only in the former that his relevant assertion would be epistemically proper.

Now, note that, at first glance, the relevance of pragmatic WAMs to this thesis is somehow unclear; after all, what the defenders of this view want to say mainly concerns cases of assertions featuring knowledge attributions and tabled error possibilities. It is DeRose's claim to know in conjunction with the raised counter-possibility of changing hours that supposedly pragmatically conveys a falsehood, and

[88] SA also comes in more than one variety; first there are people thinking that assertion is governed by a single epistemic norm, which stipulates that the appropriate amount of warrant for epistemically proper assertion varies with contextual features (e.g. Brown (2010), Gerken (2012), Goldberg (2015) McKinnon (2013), Rescorla (2009)). Another way to be a sensitivist about assertion is to stipulate several epistemic norms governing assertion, depending on the context (e.g. Greenough (2011), Levin (2008), Stone (2007)). The subtle differences between the above views are, however, to a large extent, irrelevant for now (but see the next section for refinements). That is because this paper dwells at a higher level of generality: what I am concerned with is the claim that epistemically proper assertability varies with practical stakes, no matter what triggers the variation in propriety in question. Insofar as these authors stand by this claim, they are the proper target of my argument.

[89] It is fair to say that defenders of SA part ways on what the relevant contextual determiners are; that is, for some of them, practical concerns figure higher on the list (e.g. Gerken 2012), while others (e.g. Goldberg 2015) focus more on non-practical context sensitivity.

therefore triggers the impermissibility intuition. We have, however, seen that the intuition generalizes to merely asserting the proposition embedded in the knowledge attribution, and to high stakes cases featuring no tabled error possibilities. As such, one could think that we can leave the pragmatic WAM line aside.

I will do just that, and focus on the epistemic incarnation of the view, shortly. However, before doing so, I want to consider one possible line the pragmatic WAM-er might take in order to explain the generalized data.

6.2.1 Pragmatic WAMs

Consider, again, the ASPIRIN cases: say that, in ASPIRIN2, against the common sense intuition, you were to go on and tell your sister 'don't worry, I have aspirin at home' when it turns out her baby has a fever. Now, if knowledge is the norm of assertion, it is reasonable for your sister to believe that you know the content of your assertion. But then, if the pragmatic WAM-ers are right, this implicature in itself should be able to generate the expectation that you can eliminate all error possibilities that are relevant at the context. Of course, none are strictly speaking tabled: no talk of counter-possibilities is featured in the case. However, the WAM line could go, the set of relevant counter-possibilities need not be made explicit, since it is reasonable to assume an implicit common set thereof, dependent on stakes. For instance, one obvious error possibility that plausibly becomes implicitly salient at the ASPIRIN2 context is that you misremember having bought aspirin.

Long story short, according to the envisaged pragmatic WAM generalized line, what happens in ASPIRIN2 is that, by asserting that you have aspirin at home you imply you know that you have aspirin at home, which pragmatically conveys that you are able to dismiss the counter-possibility of misremembering having bought it. Since it is false that you are in a strong enough position to dismiss this counter-possibility, your assertion is improper, hence the intuition.

A few things about this: first, if the pragmatic WAM-er is right, miscommunication involved in high stakes linguistic exchanges should be an extremely common event. That is because, while it is plausible that some of the relevant counter-possibilities brought into play in high stakes cases are going to constitute common ground for the parties involved, it is far from clear that everyone is going to entertain one and the same set thereof, and even less plausible that there is an objective matter of fact as to exactly which error possibilities become salient at a context, which we are all aware of implicitly.

Second, let us abstract for a bit from the nits and grits of this line in order to note that, at the end of the day, proper assertability does not seem to have much in common with error possibilities to begin with, but rather seems to vary with stakes alone. We have already seen that the necessity claim involved in this way of generalizing pragmatic WAMs runs into difficulties: unassertability seems to persist even in the absence of explicitly tabled error possibilities, and the attempt to rescue the view by going implicit seems empirically implausible. What about the corresponding sufficiency claim? To answer this question, consider the following cases adapted from (Turri 2010, 88):

High Door: Our family has just pulled out of the driveway, on the beginning of a week-long vacation to New Hampshire's White Mountains. We live in a relatively safe neighbourhood, but there has been a rash of burglaries lately. As we near the corner of our block, my wife asks, "Is the door locked?" I respond, "Yes, it's locked. I remember turning the key and feeling it click." "Maybe you're mistaken; you do sometimes make mistakes," she remarks, *"so* . . . I ask again: Is it locked?" "I *think* it's locked, but I'd better go back and check," I reply. "All right," she says.

Low Door: Our family is taking a short walk to the corner to place a letter in the mailbox, which is within plain sight of our front door. We have a policy of locking our door when we leave the premises, and we prefer to follow through on our policies. As we reach the end of the driveway on our way to the mailbox, my wife asks, "Is the door locked?" I respond, "Yes, it's locked. I remember turning the key and feeling it click." "Maybe you're mistaken; you do sometimes make mistakes," she remarks *"so* . . . I ask again: Is it locked?" "It's locked," I reply. "All right," she says.

I share John Turri's intuition that, in Low Door, both Turri and his wife are right to put the matter to rest. If that is true, however, it looks as though, at least in some cases, tabled error possibilities, in absence of raised stakes, are not very good at doing the work needed by pragmatic WAM-ers, i.e. at triggering unassertability intuitions. Jessica Brown (2006) makes a similar point with regard to knowledge attributions: "[T]he likelihood and success of [an] attempt to resist the knowledge-undermining tendency of a mentioned error is affected by whether the issue in question is practically important."

This, of course, should hardly come as a surprise: just because sceptical worries are 'in the air' while I write this epistemology thesis, for instance, it hardly follows I do not know and cannot assert that

there is a computer in front of me. More is needed to trigger unassertability.

In sum, the picture looks as follows: tabled error possibilities are neither necessary nor sufficient in generating unassertability. In contrast, stakes alone seem to do the trick. If that is the case, however, a plausible pragmatic WAM explanation of the generalized data does not seem to be forthcoming; if that is the case, the relevance of the view for this thesis turns out to be minimal.

6.2.2 The Real Problem with Epistemic WAMs

Let us, then, move on to its epistemic cousin, assertion sensitivism. To begin with, here is a more precise version of the SA claim:[90]

Assertion Sensitivism (SA): The degree of warrant necessary for epistemically proper assertion varies with features of the practical context, while the degree of warrant necessary for knowledge stays fixed.

And recall the fairly uncontroversial value-theoretic claim concerning the relation between the axiological and the deontic we have seen in Chapter #1:

The Value Individuation Thesis (VIT): Norms of type X are associated with goods of type X.

This section argues that, surprisingly enough, in spite of the widespread support they enjoy, SA and VIT are incompatible. To do this, I first look at the data that are taken to motivate SA. Further on, I spell out what the SA claim amounts to when taken in conjunction with VIT. As it turns out, if VIT holds, SA is untenable, for it collapses into knowledge sensitivism, which is what its champions were trying to avoid in the first place. Given just how popular VIT is among value theorists, I take this result to be especially worrying for the defender of SA; as such, I will then consider several ways out she might take. I argue they all fail.

Let us start by noting that, according to VIT, prudential norms will be associated with prudential goods, moral norms will be

[90] Again, many of the SA supporters (e.g. Gerken 2012, Goldberg 2015) do not restrict their claim to mere practical context; many other contextual determiners are taken to potentially affect the propriety of a given assertion. For the purposes of this dissertation, however, I am only discussing the more restricted claim.

associated with moral goods, etc. Epistemic norms will thus go together with epistemic goods.

Recall that VIT is pretty uncontentious from a value-theoretic perspective. That is because the *mere association* claim between norms and goods of the same type does not imply any substantial value-theoretic commitment; it holds on both the most notable views regarding the relationship of the good to the deontic. The teleologist explains the 'ought' in terms of the 'good'; according to this philosopher, the following is true:

VIT-Teleology: Norm of type X are there to guide us in reaching goods of type X.

The deontologist reverses the order of explanation: according to 'Fitting Attitude' accounts of value,

VIT-Deontology: Goods of type X are only valuable because norms of type X give us reasons to favour them.

Anyhow, one way or another, the mere *association* claim holds. Let us now take a closer look at the SA proposal concerning the normativity of assertion and at how it fares in conjunction with VIT. First, what we are talking about is the *epistemic* norm of assertion. The question, then, becomes: what is the relevant epistemic good? Many authors (e.g. David (2005)) regard truth as the fundamental epistemic good. The most prominent rival view in the literature takes it to be knowledge (Williamson (2000)). For our purposes here, in order to stay on the safe side, we will test the plausibility SA for both candidate goods.[91] Note, also, that the epistemic interest at stake can be thought to be both at the speaker and at the hearer's end. As such, we will have to look on both sides.

Let us start with teleological order of explanation. By VIT, then, SA proponents will also be committed to:

SA-Teleology: The SA norm is there to guide one in reaching epistemic goods.

[91] Note, also, that the argument can be run in a parallel fashion for a justification goal (and the results are likely to coincide with the results for the knowledge goal, insofar as what is meant is knowledge-level justification). Also, see 'Objections and Replies' for a discussion of what is the case on the assumption of an epistemic goal that itself varies with practical stakes, such as 'providing actionable information'.

Spelling out the norm, and on a truth goal assumption, then, we get:

SA-Teleology^{truth} One should proportion the degree of warrant supporting one's assertion to features of the practical context to the aim of making a true assertion/ generating true belief in one's hearer.

But surely SA proponents would not want to stand behind this formulation, since it is blatantly false: pragmatic factors do not influence truth-conduciveness. Also, here is Gerken, for one: "…epistemic warrant is determined by traditional truth-related factors and not by pragmatic factors (Gerken 2012, 377).

In the light of all this, maybe we should just move on; maybe the real problem is the truth goal. Let us take knowledge[92] to be the main epistemic good, then, and plug it into the SA-Consequentialism. This will give us:

SA-Teleology^{knowledge} One should proportion the degree of warrant supporting one's assertion to features of the practical context to the aim of making a knowledgeable assertion/ generating knowledge in one's hearer.

Unfortunately for the SA proponent, this formulation, although not strikingly false, amounts to what she was trying to avoid in the first place; that is, context sensitivity of knowledge. Here is how: in the speaker's case, the route to SK is pretty straightforward: if, in order to come to know, the speaker is in need of more epistemic support in high-stakes contexts than in low-stakes ones, we are back in the SK yard. While on the hearer's side a similar result might be less obvious, notice that what the claim amounts to, as a matter of fact, is that the hearer needs an epistemically better source in high-stakes scenarios than in low stakes ones in order to gain knowledge. Surely, given the strict invariantist motivations behind SA, this is an unacceptable result, since it again collapses it into SK; what the SA claim would amount to is a view according to which one needs a degree of warrant that is suitable to one's practical context in order to be knowledgeable.

If that is the case, SA seems to not be very nicely compatible with a teleological value-theoretic framework. On the one hand, this is rather unfortunate; after all, ideally, one does not want one's preferred account of the normativity of assertion to commit one to very

[92] Note that prominent defenders of CA (e.g. Goldberg 2015) explicitly support generating testimonial knowledge as the main epistemic role of assertion.

substantive value-theoretic claims. On the other hand, some think that consequentialism is implausible on independent grounds, in which case the SA champion should not worry too much. Let us change the framework, then, and go for the deontological incarnation of the Association Claim. Consider, first:

SA-Deontology^{truth}: Truth is an epistemic good because the SA norm gives us reason to favour it.

It is a bit mysterious in virtue of what exactly SA gives us reason to favour truth rather than, say, falsehood. After all, it looks as though, independently of whether I am right or wrong about whether *p* is the case, according to SA, the important thing is that I don't assert it unless I have a contextually appropriate amount of warrant.[93] As such, SA seems to be completely indifferent when it comes to whether I am in possession of the truth or not, and therefore fails to favour it in any way.

SA-Deontology^{knowledge}: Knowledge is an epistemic good because the SA norm gives us reason to favour it.

Again, this formulation is either false, or it collapses SA into SK. Recall that SA asks for less warrant in low stakes scenarios and more warrant in high stakes; as such, it gives us no particular reason to favour classical invariantist knowledge over other epistemic standings characterized by less, respectively more warrant.[94] If, however, knowledge itself is sensitive to practical context, as SK would have it, the SA norm is able to provide us with reason to favour it.

To sum up, then: if the (extremely plausible and value-theoretically innocent) VIT holds, SA comes out untenable. On both available VIT directions of explanation, in a truth-goal framework, its claims turn out false, or, at least, highly implausible. In a knowledge-goal framework, the position collapses into context sensitivity of

[93] Of course, the SA champion could argue that, given that warrant is truth conducive, SA does give us (indirect) reason to favor truth. Note, though, that this reply would not do, in virtue of the fact that the SA requirement is stronger than that: it does not merely ask for warrant, it asks for a contextually appropriate amount of warrant. However, given that the context under discussion is practical context, it is far from clear why this requirement gives us any reason in particular to favor truth.

[94] Furthermore, given what we have seen above when discussing the truth-involving formulation, not only does SA not give us reason to favor knowledge over other epistemic standings characterized by more or less warrant, but it even fails to give us reason to favor it over 'bad' epistemic standings, such as, for instance, weakly justified false belief.

knowledge, which was what its proponents were reacting against in the first place.

Note, also, that if the SA proponent wants to take the obvious route out – i.e., denying that VIT holds – she will either have to engage with a whole lot of value theory literature on the matter,[95] or she owes us very strong reasons to believe that epistemic normativity is special in this respect.

6.2.3 Objections and Replies

One reply that might come from the SA camp, though, could go along the following lines: the SA champion could argue that the variability in warrant is required for belief generation. In high stakes scenarios, the thought would go, the hearer might be extremely cautious and ask the speaker to back her assertion. In this case, being in possession of an amount of warrant appropriate to the situation would put the speaker in a position to be able to meet this demand, and thus successfully generate the relevant belief in her hearer.

The problem with this move, however, is that, on the present formulation of SA, it will not do. That is, as it stands, SA only asks speakers to be in the possession of the relevant degree of warrant, not to also have access to it so as to be able to back their assertion if needed.

Notice, also, that adding the necessary access requirement would render the view fairly implausible; after all, surely small children can produce epistemically proper assertions, in spite of the fact that they don't have very well developed reflective capacities. Furthermore, most of our knowledge is stocked in memory and, for most of it, we do not really remember how we came to acquire it to begin with. I, for instance, surely do not remember how I got to know that Berlin is the capital of Germany. Does that mean I cannot make the relevant assertion? The answer, according to this new version of SA will have to be 'no'.

One option still available to the SA defender at this point would be to make the need for discursive justification context-dependent also. Gerken's view, for instance, explicitly requests that, in some contexts, but not all, one should be able to back one's assertion with appropriate support.

There are, however, good reasons to believe that Gerken's prospects of avoiding the above problem for SA in this way are dim. To

[95] For a nice overview, see Schroeder (2012).

see this, let us take another look at the envisaged SA champion's reply: the variability in warrant is required for belief generation, not for its truth. In high stakes scenarios, the hearer might be extremely cautious and ask the speaker to back his assertion. Were the speaker not able to do so, the hearer would not believe the content of the assertion, and, as such, the aim of generating of true belief/knowledge would be missed. Now, note that, for all is said above, we are dealing with a descriptive, empirical claim: the thought is that, as a matter of fact, there is a chance that the hearer requests discursive justification for believing. But, of course, this cannot be what is meant to be relevant to the normativity claim of SA; after all, maybe hearers are not in their epistemic right to do so, in which case no obligation for the speaker should follow. Surely the SA defender does not want to say that any absurd claim hearers might have is going to affect the content of the epistemic norm governing speaker's speech acts.

What seems to be needed is a normative claim alongside the descriptive one; for any obligation to follow on the speaker's side, it must be the case that, on top of them being in the habit to do so, hearers are also epistemically permitted to ask for discursive justification. This, however, will easily drive the SA defender back in the trouble he was trying to avoid to begin with. Here is how: the question that arises is: why is it that in high stakes scenarios, but not in low stakes, is the hearer permitted to ask for additional discursive warrant from the speaker in order to come to believe her assertion? Long story short, why is it that less warrant is sufficient for belief generation on the hearer's side in low stakes than in high stakes? The answer needs to be: because such are the requirements of the norm of belief. Note, though, that, given that knowledge implies belief, from a pragmatic, shifty view of the norm of belief to knowledge sensitivism is but a short way to go.

What SA seems to need is a complementary pluralistic account regarding the epistemic goal, tightly connected to contextual practical determiners.[96] That is, roughly, a view on which the epistemic goal varies with practical stakes, such as: the goal of assertion is providing actionable information. On such a view, variation in warrant for proper assertion would just track the variation in epistemic goal, which, in turn, would track the variation in epistemic needs given the practical context. To my knowledge, this view is still in need of defence in its own right, though, and thus, as things stand, it can hardly be employed to the support of SA. Furthermore, a few worries arise even from just this rough sketch. For instance, the defender of such an account will want to

[96] Or, alternatively, on the deontological reading, an account where propriety by the epistemic norm co-varies with propriety by the prudential one. Nothing hinges on this here: the problems identified for the teleological reading generalize.

avoid the following result: on her view, given that epistemic concerns go hand in hand with practical concerns, asserting a falsehood, or something one has no justification whatsoever for, in return for 1 million dollars would be *epistemically* perfectly fine. That surely does not sound right. What the defender of this account will need, then, would be a principled way to separate the 'good' prudential considerations from the 'bad' ones. I submit that there is no easy answer for this problem I sight.

Furthermore, holding this practical-context sensitive view about the epistemic goal in general will, again, get SA into trouble when it comes to belief; that is, SA will, once more, be in danger of collapsing into SK, if the goal of belief also varies with practical factors. On the other hand, restricting the view to assertion seems like an ad hoc manoeuvre.

One last option for the SA defender that still needs to be discussed is her possible retreat from direct to indirect practical stakes sensitivity. According to this account, the reason why we need more warrant in high stakes than in low stakes is because more error possibilities become salient. As such, proper assertability is only indirectly sensitive to practical stakes, through its being sensitive to the (genuinely) epistemic need for dismissing salient error possibilities. Patrick Greenough (2011) defends this view. According to Greenough, assertion is governed by different norms in high stakes and low stakes scenarios. That is, in high stakes, but not in low stakes, the speaker must also be able to cite explicit evidence against all contextually salient not-p possibilities.

The assumption that needs be discussed here, however, is the claim that this need is a genuinely epistemic one. To what epistemic aim, does one need to be able to dismiss the relevant error possibilities? One plausible answer is that the latter constitute themselves in normative defeaters and, as such, the hearer (epistemically) should not believe the speaker's assertion unless suitable defeater defeaters are offered. This reply, indeed, seems to steer clear of any pragmatic normative consequences for belief. Note, however, that this reply will not do its job in supporting SA's claim against KNA, i.e. the claim than more than knowledge is needed in high stakes context for proper assertability. After all, plausibly enough, the same normative defeaters that forbid the hearer from believing will also (normatively) act on the speaker's epistemic standing. As such, the defender of KNA can easily help herself to the same explanation of the Shiftiness Intuition here: the reason why the speaker needs to be able to dismiss relevant error possibilities constituting themselves in normative defeaters is because,

otherwise, he fails to have knowledge, and therefore is not permitted to assert by KNA.

One last thing about this: the SA conflict with VIT is hardly benign and isolated: its consequences loom large when it comes to the SA fit with the general theory of the normativity of action. Recall, for instance, that we have seen that, when it comes to action in general, overriding norms can either make my token action all-things-considered inappropriate, even though the norm we are concerned with is respected (Override 1), or else modify the standards for all-things-considered proper token action up or down, when what is at stake is a gradable property (Override 2). Also, uncontroversially, assertion is a type of action, and justification is a gradable property. If that is the case, again, unless we are given good reason to believe that epistemic normativity differs from other types of normativity in this respect, we should expect norms pertaining to the normativity of action in general, like prudential or moral norms, to be able to override the epistemic norm we are talking about in both ways identified above. And, indeed, that is exactly what my account predicts.

Note that the champion of SA will have trouble accommodating Override 2. After all, according to this fellow, it is the epistemic norm that asks for more warrant in high stakes rather than low stakes. As such, the epistemic and the prudential norm go hand in hand in being sensitive to practical matters. This, however, seems to turn epistemic normativity into an odd bird; as such, the SA proponent owes us an explanation of this oddness.

6.3 The KK Strategy

In the Introduction to Chapter 1, I mentioned that, while a vast majority of philosophers assume the sensitivity dilemma, there are also a few exceptions to the rule. One strategy to defend an invariantist KNA has been to argue for a need of higher order knowledge in contextualist cases. Tim Williamson (2005a, 2005b), notably, defends such a view. Roughly, the thought is that high stakes require one to stay on the safe side and know that they're meeting the condition for proper assertability before going ahead with it. Since knowledge is the norm for assertion, what is, according to Williamson, expected from speakers in high stakes scenarios is that they know that they know before making an assertion (henceforth KK).

In a similar vein, John Turri (2010) argues that, in high stakes contexts the speech act that is in fact being performed is no longer mere assertion, but an epistemically 'more expensive one', the speech act of

guaranteeing. The proper performance of the latter, Turri (2014) argues, requires more than just knowledge: one needs to know that one knows in order to be in a proper epistemic position for guaranteeing.

This section takes a closer look at the KK strategy; since whether the need of KK is sourced in speech act variation or not makes little difference for the purposes of this paper, I will only look at the Williamsonian view. However, a vast majority of the results below – in particular the necessity and sufficiency worries in section 6.1.2, equally apply to the Turri line.

One thing before we go ahead: note that, strictly speaking, this thesis assumes an extremely friendly position when it comes to all invariantist KNA-friendly accounts. After all, as announced from the very introduction, the aim here is to escape the dilemma, and thus to show that we can reap all the theoretical benefits of both KNA and CI. If it turns out there is more than one workable path out of the shiftiness worry, so much the better. And indeed, in what follows, rather than trying to knock down my opponents, what I will do is try to show why the account put forth here enjoys a higher degree of plausibility.

6.3.1 Williamson's 'No Luminosity'

According to Tim Williamson, contextualist cases are but a symptom of the good old lack of luminosity problem for knowledge. Here is how: according to Williamson (2000), any non-trivial condition – knowledge included – is non-luminous, in the sense that it allows for borderline cases where it barely obtains, such that one is not in a position to know that it does. When I barely make the threshold for knowledge, I fail to know that I know it due to the fact that my belief that I do, although true, is unsafe: it could have easily been false.

Now, according to (Williamson 2005a), this failure of luminosity is precisely what the contextualist exploits with the cases she puts forth. In the both of the bank cases, for instance, while having been to the bank last Saturday is good enough warrant to know that the bank will be open this Saturday too, it only barely meets the standard for knowledge.

Now, according to Williamson, strictly speaking, all that is needed for proper action – assertion included – is first order knowledge. However, when the stakes are high, we tend to find people who act without knowing that they meet the condition for proper action blameworthy for so doing:

> How harshly should we judge practical reasoning in which the agent relies on an appropriate premise without being in a position to know that it is appropriate? A natural answer is: it depends on how much is at stake. If not much, then it seems unreasonably pedantic to condemn the reasoning. But if matters of life and death are at stake, the charge that the agent was not in a position to know that the premise was appropriate becomes more serious (Williamson2005a, 232).

Furthermore, even second order knowledge might not be enough, if the relevant stakes are sufficiently high: the higher the stakes, the more iterations of knowledge may be expected from agents, on pain of blameworthiness. Now, he case of assertion is, according to Williamson, but an instance of the above. Therefore, in what follows, I will restrict my discussion accordingly.

Let us unpack Williamson's explanation, for easiness of use; it looks as though there are two conjoined claims at work in his account:

No Luminosity: Contextualist cases are borderline, non-luminous cases of knowledge.

Blameworthiness: Agents who assert in the absence of the contextually appropriate higher order knowledge that they meet the condition for proper assertion are blameworthy for so doing.

According to Williamson, No Luminosity, in conjunction with Blameworthiness, explains the Shiftiness Intuition. Strictly speaking, you know that you have aspirin at home in both the ASPIRIN cases. As such, according to the norm of assertion, you are permitted to assert that you have aspirin at home. However, your memorial belief barely makes the threshold for knowledge, and thus, in both cases, you fail to know that you know, and therefore you fail to know that your assertion is appropriate. Now, in Williamson's view, it would be rather unreasonable to insist that you should have second order knowledge in the low stakes ASPIRIN case. However, given that you don't know that you are meeting the condition for properly asserting, it seems unacceptable to do so in ASPIRIN 2, where your nephew's health hinges on it.

Here are some general worries I have about Williamson's strategy. Recall that according to Williamson, the higher the stakes, the higher the order of knowledge that is required for blamelessly acting/asserting. Furthermore, according to him, in practice we often have enough iterations of knowledge to withstand the interrogations to

which it is reasonable to respond. Now, one question that arises concerns the empirical plausibility of this picture; that is, how plausible is it that humans have such an extended capacity for higher order thought, as to cover the full range of stakes variability? Sure, one might, on most occasions, have warrant to believe that one knows that one knows that one knows that one knows, for instance; how plausible is it, though, that we actually have the mental capacity to form the corresponding belief? But if it turns out that human higher order capacities are limited to a small number of iterations of knowledge, one question that arises is whether the Williamsonian picture is rich enough to cover a plausibly fine grained scale of stakes.

6.1.2 KK: Necessity and Sufficiency Worries

For now, let us leave the issue of empirical adequacy aside, though, and look more closely at the two claims that we have identified above. Take, first, No Luminosity: note that, crucially, the only reading on which it will be able to do the intended work is a necessity claim: contextualist cases *need* be borderline cases of knowledge in order to trigger the Shiftiness Intuition. Otherwise, if the Shiftiness Intuition persists for clear cases of knowledge, the entire non-luminosity argument falls apart, since it's no longer plausible that second order knowledge is really.

However, on this reading, No Luminosity loses a lot of its appeal; Jessica Brown (2005) puts forth clear cases of knowledge that trigger the same intuition of variability with stakes. Of course, if the contextualist employs such a case, we have little reason to believe that the subject knows without knowing that she knows. Here is Brown:

LO: [S]uppose that Lo truly believes that the seaweed in front of her is correctly classified as of type F, on the basis of the testimony of an accompanying expert. She has no reason to doubt the expert's competence and the expert is in fact reliable (Brown 2005, 323).

According to Brown, LO's warrant is well above the ordinary standards for knowledge. Therefore, on a non-sceptical invariantist view, Lo knows that the seaweed is of type F and, since her knowledge is not borderline, it is also plausible to think that she knows that she knows this. It also seems correct for her to say 'I know that the seaweed is of type F' and to use the relevant proposition in practical reasoning.

HI: Hi is in the same epistemic position as Lo; she truly believes that the seaweed in front of her is correctly classified as of type F on the basis of the testimony of an accompanying [reliable] expert […]. However, [in her context], […] seaweed F could rapidly come to dominate the local seaweed population, leading to loss of the marine diversity for which the area is internationally renowned. The only way to prevent this loss would be a hugely expensive clean-up programme which would require closure of nearby tourist resorts. Further, in Hi's context, various error possibilities have been raised, such as the possibility that the expert is mistaken ('Experts do sometimes make mistakes') (Brown 2005, 323).

It looks as though in HI, but not in LO, it is inappropriate to assert 'The seaweed is of type F' or to rely on the proposition that the seaweed is of type F in, say, deciding whether to close the local resort. Furthermore, it looks as though Hi should make further checks by asking one or more other experts for their opinion.

Now, Williamson suggest that his account is able to handle such cases by making use of the contextual variability of needed higher order knowledge. That is, in Brown's cases, in spite of being in a fairly nice epistemic situation, Hi still misses the contextually appropriate amount of iterations of knowledge: "[...] if the stakes are high enough, prudent human agents will engage in third-order reasoning about whether to trust their second-order reasoning about whether to trust their first-order reasoning" (2005, 233).

One problem with this reply, however, is that it leads straight into scepticism about actionability and assertability alike. After all, Hi's warrant seems to be way above the ordinary threshold for knowledge. We do not usually know what we know from experts in the relevant fields: I don't know I live close to the train station from an expert in the geography of my town, nor do I know that I am wearing a coat from a fashion expert. But if Hi's epistemic position is much better than mine ordinarily is, and, in spite of this, she still misses the appropriate iteration of knowledge to act/assert in high stakes contexts, then so do I. As such, if Williamson is right, I cannot tell you I am wearing a coat in a context where the stakes are high (or, to be more precise, as high as in HI), nor can I count on the fact that I live close to the station in deciding when to leave the house. This, to say the least, does not sound intuitively right.

On top of all this, in spite of its initial plausibility, at a closer look, Williamson's Blameworthiness thesis does not stand so tall either. First and foremost, there are reasons to believe that it is much too strong, for reasons pertaining to actionability/assertability in the case of cognitively unsophisticated agents. Take small children, for instance:

their capacity for second order thought is, to say the least, questionable, and anything higher than second order is highly unlikely to be present. However, it does not seem to be the case that they cannot assert in high stakes scenarios.

One way for Williamson to avoid this result[97] would be to claim that (1) one cannot assert without having the concept of knowledge – maybe in virtue of KNA being constitutive of assertion – and (2) insofar as the child in question has the concept of knowledge, she has higher order capacities too; after all, if she can predicate knowledge about third parties, she should be able to predicate it about herself. Here are two worries about this reply, however; first, the account stands and falls with the above non-trivial theses; as such, it requires independent defence thereof, and taking on board all the relevant theoretical commitments. Second, note that the conjunction of (1) and (2), together with the plausibility of late development of the capacity for higher order thought, paint a fairly skeptical, counterintuitive picture concerning scarcity of assertion in young children. Furthermore, this seems to conflict with the generous Williamsonian landscape in this regard; according to Williamson (2000, 258) himself, assertion is our default use of declarative sentences; if that is the case, one would think, it's an easy to encounter, fairly non-pretentious speech act. This, however, seems incompatible with the fairly strong thesis above – that is, that one is able to assert if and only if one has second order capacities.[98]

It is also not clear that taking this controversial view on board is going to help much to begin with. To see this, note, first, that Williamson will surely not want to say that third order thought is also required for children's speech acts to count as assertions. However, it is easy to construct a case in which it looks as though it is perfectly fine for a child to assert in scenarios parallel to HI, although, by stipulation, the child lacks third order knowledge in virtue of her age. If that is the case, one could wonder why HI needs third order knowledge in order to properly assert and the child does not. Consider a modified version of the HI scenario;

MARY: Same as in HI, only this time HI finds out that (weirdly enough) the relevant sample of seaweed is of type F if and only if there is a table

[97] For the record, I doubt this is a way out Williamson is likely to endorse.

[98] A side note: one might wonder how compatible such a claim is with Williamson's general externalist leanings. After all, over-intellectualization charges are among the main motivations against internalism, and thus favoring externalist accounts of justification.

in the room where her seven year old daughter Mary is, and not otherwise. Also, Mary is aware of all this.

Surely, it's perfectly fine for Mary, when asked by her mother whether there is a table in the room, to assert that there is one based on her corresponding piece of perceptual knowledge. Note, however, that the relevant stakes are held fixed, and Mary fails to have third order knowledge of the asserted proposition in virtue of her lack of cognitive sophistication. As opposed to HI, however, she seems to be able to make permissible assertions.

If that is the case, it looks as though some other difference between HI and Mary is the relevant one in explaining the case. One plausible thought that readily comes to mind, of course, is that, contra Williamson, the difference lies in the amount of warrant for the first order belief: Mary's belief enjoys more warrant than HI's, maybe in virtue of having a perceptual rather than a testimonial belief, or simply in because her inquiry enjoys a lesser degree of difficulty.

Now, one way in which Williamson might want to reply to the objection featuring non-sophisticated agents is by appealing to their general excusability for norm violation, related, indeed, to their very lack of sophistication. The thought would be that, in the case above, while both Mary and HI lack third order knowledge, Mary, but not HI is blameless for asserting in virtue of her limited cognitive capacities. After all, we often find children blameless and adults blameworthy for one and the same deed; take, for instance, breaking an expensive vase. Or, even better, making false assertions.

Note, though, that the case under discussion seems importantly disanalogous: if both HI and Mary break an expensive vase, or say something false, it seems plausible that, although something bad happened in both cases, we are going to find Mary, but not HI, blameless for it, in virtue of her young age. In the case of Mary asserting that there's a table in the room, however, it does not seem like anything wrong happened to begin with, for which Mary might be in need of an excuse.

Last but not least, here is another related worry about the necessity claim involved in the KK account. Recall that Williamson wants to say that his picture has a fair degree of generality: in contextualist cases and beyond, we tend to harshly judge people who, when a lot is at stake, act without knowing that they meet the condition for proper action. The story about norm satisfaction and knowledge of norm satisfaction looks nice and generally plausible. Note, though, that it is not clear that the story will work for further iterations of knowledge, since it's not clear that the requirement for more than two

iterations of knowledge has the same degree of generality.[99] After all, it looks as though, if you driving 50 km/hour and you know that you are, that's all one could ever ask for proper driving. If you are driving at proper speed, and you know that you are, what is missing?

6.1.3 Blameworthy, Why?

The section above outlined some worries regarding both the necessity and the sufficiency of higher order knowledge for assertability in high stakes scenarios. This brings us to the last and most serious worry of this section: what is the normative source of all this blameworthiness/blamelessness talk Williamson's account of the shiftiness data comes with? One option that Williamson considers and rejects – with what I take to be good reason – is that it is the norm for action/assertion itself:

> The insensitive invariantist could try to build variation in the required number of iterations of knowledge into appropriateness itself, with a corresponding revision of [the knowledge norm of action/assertion]: in some cases q would be appropriate iff one knew q, in others iff one knew that one knew q, and so on, depending on the stakes. If such a move is acceptable, it provides the insensitive invariantist with a systematic response to arguments from practical differences to shifting semantic standards for epistemic terms. However, the move does not guarantee the epistemic accessibility of appropriateness, for the anti-luminosity argument is quite general (Williamson 2005, 233).

In sum, the thought is that, as things stand right now, on KNA, the non-luminosity of knowledge makes possible cases where you obey the norm but you fail to know that this is the case – and are, therefore, by Williamson's lights, blameworthy for making the corresponding assertions in high stakes scenarios. Similarly, however, if one modifies the norm as to stipulate that you not only have to know, but you also need to have the higher order knowledge appropriate to your stakes, that condition can fail to be luminous too – like any other non-trivial condition. That is, you can know that p, and have the contextually appropriate higher order knowledge also, but fail to know that you do.

[99] Unless, of course, one takes the KK requirement to be a second norm, which, itself, stipulates a condition that, in sufficiently high stakes, one needs to know one meets. And so on. For problems with a picture along these lines, see section #6.1.3.

In this case, again, Williamson will have to say that you are blameworthy for asserting, given that you didn't know you had a strong enough epistemic position. And so on.

I agree with Williamson on this count. The question, though, is whether leaving the requirement for contextually appropriate higher order knowledge out of the norm for action/assertion helps avoid the above problem.

To see the worry, note that the following principle seems uncontroversially true:

BLAME: Blameworthiness implies norm violation.

BLAME seems to be a fairly safe assumption to go on; after all, it is plausible to believe that one cannot be blameworthy if one has not done anything wrong; furthermore, trivially, one cannot do something wrong without braking a norm, i.e. wrongness implies norm violation of sorts. Together, these two claims imply BLAME.[100]

If that is the case, however, one question Williamson needs to answer on pain of ad-hoc-ness is: what is the normative source of the blameworthiness claim involved in his explanation of the contextualist data? What norm makes it such that one should proportion one's higher order knowledge to one's stakes? Of course, it need not be the norm we are interested in. After all, more than one norm can – and usually will – govern one token action. Take assertion: it is plausible that, on top of KNA, it will also be governed, say, by Gricean relevance requirements. As such, one can be blameworthy for making an otherwise knowledgeable, but irrelevant assertion.ϖφφ

Still, the said blameworthiness needs a specified, plausible normative source, on pain of ad-hoc-ness. Now, if Williamson does not want the source to be the main norm at stake, presumably, what will need to be the case is that he stipulates a supplementary norm which triggers the blameworthiness in question. As such, the normative picture that we get is one where, on top of KNA, assertion is also

[100] To be clear: the claim here is not that, just because you are blameworthy for acting/asserting, you are in breach of the norm for action/assertion we are interested in. That is because, first of all, for any non-unique norm N governing φ-ing φ-ing, blameworthiness for acting/asserting can be sourced in a complementary norm governing φ-ing. To use Jessica Brown's example once again, I can be prudentially blameworthy for telling my boss he is bald, in spite of the fact that I am perfectly well warranted to do so from an epistemic perspective: I know he's bald. Furthermore, for any norm N governing Φ-ing, if one is blameworthy for Φ-ing in breach of N, it need not be that the source of blameworthiness is the breach of N. To see this, recall the case of indirect blameworthiness discussed in Chapter #4: one can be indirectly blameworthy for Φ-ing in breach of N by being blameworthy for φ -ing, of which Φ-ing is the consequence. Kvanvig's Billy Bob is a case in point.

governed by a second norm, call it the Luminosity Norm, asking for an appropriate level of higher order knowledge relative to the stakes in place:

The Luminosity Norm for Assertion (LNA): One's assertion that p is permissible iff one has the contextually appropriate number of iterations of knowledge of p.

While the resulting normative picture might look less simple than what we started with – and therefore, arguably, theoretically less satisfactory – it need not be that its complexity affects its plausibility. After all, we have just seen that, plausibly, assertion is governed by many other norms – like, for instance the Gricean maxims; if that is the case, why not think of LNA just as one of these other norms governing assertion on top of KNA?

Unfortunately, though, complexity considerations aside, once the normative structure is made clear, two fairly serious problems arise for the Williamsonian line: first, consider Williamson's further lack of luminosity worry. Recall that the reason why Williamson did not just ad the requirement for contextually appropriate higher order knowledge to the norm for assertion itself was that, like any other non-trivial condition, this condition too can fail to be luminous. That is, you can know that p, and have the contextually appropriate higher order knowledge also, but fail to know that you do. In this case, again, Williamson will have to say that you are blameworthy for asserting, Note, though, that it's not clear what will be gained by having two separate norms. After all, insofar as LNA is also a norm governing assertion, on top of KNA, one can fail to know that the conditions thereby specified obtain, and, arguably be blameworthy for asserting under these circumstances in high stakes scenarios.

Second, more importantly, what becomes less than clear is the status of the sufficiency claim involved in KNA; after all, if LNA also governs assertion, it looks as though, as a matter of fact, being knowledgeable is not sufficient for proper assertion.

As far as I can see, there are two ways out for Williamson a this point: indexing to subjects or to types of norms. I will look at them in turn.

On the first option, LNA governs a different entity than KNA: while the latter is a norm for the speech act, i.e. stating what it takes for an assertion to be a good assertion, the former stipulates what it takes for a speaker to be a good speaker. Williamson (Forthcoming) puts forth a normative framework for blameless believers meant to address

the New Evil Demon problem for externalism,[101] which might prove useful here. According to Williamson, a given norm N typically generates derivative norms, which render subjects who violate the primary norm blameless for so doing:

> For example, there is the secondary norm DN of having a *general disposition* to comply with N, of being the sort of person who complies with N. […] There is also a tertiary norm ODN of doing what someone who complied with DN would do in the situation at issue ('O' for 'occurrent') (Williamson Forthcoming, 6-7).

Correspondingly, maybe LNA is a derivative norm of KNA and what is going on in the contextualist cases is that we have a correct assertion – an assertion that meets KNA, the primary norm - with a blameworthy speaker, in virtue of her being in breach of the derivative norm LNA.

Now, the problem with this is that translating blamelessness talk into blameworthiness talk is not as straightforward as one might think. To see why, let's first look at DN: while complying with it might get one off the hook for having broken N, it is not clear that, if you meet the conditions for N-compliance, breaking DN implies blameworthiness. To see this, take the case of someone who does not break any traffic norm in spite of the fact that she has a psychological condition that keeps her from having the disposition to comply with traffic norms. It does not seem like there's much in the way of blame deserved by this person; to the contrary, I submit. In a nutshell, the problem is that meeting DN or ODN is – if at all - merely sufficient for blamelessness, not necessary. Conversely, one need not be blameworthy for breaking them.

Similarly, DN and ODN aside, the thought that failing to comply with LNA is enough to make a speaker into a bad speaker is also less than plausible. To see this, note, first, that LNA is a fairly strongly externalist norm. As such, complying with it is, to a very large extent, dependent on world friendliness; this, however, makes it into an implausibly strong condition to impose on speakers on pain of blameworthiness. Furthermore, recall that, according to the normative picture proposed in Chapter #4, one can break norms blamelessly in various ways (lack of control, lack of awareness etc.). LNA, of course,

[101] This case has been put forth in (Lehrer and Cohen 1983) against reliabilist accounts of justification, but they generalize to many externalist views, including Williamson's J=K account. Suppose that an evil scientist kidnaps Philip, a normal adult, and hooks his brain up to a super computer that is programmed to induce the kind of sensory experiences he would have had if he had not been kidnapped. The thought is that, intuitively, Philip is as justified after envattment as he was beforehand, although, in fact, his cognitive processes hardly ever deliver truths, not to mention knowledge.

will make no exception. Last but not least, note that Williamson's framework for blamelessness itself can be easily employed to vindicate this thought: after all, one can fail to comply with LNA but still do well by the corresponding derivative norms, call them DLNA and ODLNA.

As far as I can see, there is one way out still available for Williamson at this point: indexing to types of norms; that is, arguing that KNA is an epistemic norm for assertion, while LNA, i.e. the source of blameworthiness, is a practical norm governing this speech act. On this picture, knowledge is epistemically speaking sufficient for proper assertion; however, practical considerations ask for contextually appropriate higher order knowledge on top of the epistemic requirement. This reply seems, indeed, quite plausible, and also helps to explain the otherwise somehow weird status of LNA: when your life is at stake, prudentially, is good to check more on the status of your base for asserting.

Note, however, that what the resulting picture amounts to is extremely close to the view defended in this thesis. According to both this further specified Williamsonian line and my functionalist KNA picture, epistemically, knowledge is necessary and sufficient for proper assertion, and what explains the shiftiness intuition is a practical norm stepping in and raising the bar. The only difference between the Williamsonian and myself at this point seems to consist in the fact that she makes a specific claim about what this 'raising the bar' amounts to – i.e. need for higher order knowledge –, while I remain at a higher level of generality. According to the Williamsonian, higher stakes ask for higher orders of knowledge. According to me, they just modify the appropriate level of warrant, whatever that might consist in and no matter the order thereof.

To take stock: the Williamsonian KK line needs: (a) An empirically questionable assumption to the effect that we have fairly rich capacities of higher order thought, (b) A fairly sceptical view regarding assertability/actionability, on which our everyday pieces of knowledge are often inappropriate to use in practical reasoning/assertion, (c) A fairly sceptical view regarding presence of assertion in young children and (d) To stipulate a further norm for proper assertion. Even if we grant all this to the defender of the Williamson line, I have argued, there still remain worries about (e) The Blameworthiness claim (the MARY case) and (f) The further lack of luminosity concerning the newly specified condition for proper practical reasoning/assertability. Also, in the end, what we effectively get is but a more specific version of the picture defended in this dissertation. Note, though, that given that my proposal does not share

in any of the weaknesses mentioned above, it will be the preferable view on both empirical and theoretical grounds.

Before closing the discussion, just one more consideration: recall that Williamson also employs explanations featuring practical overriding with first order warrant variation anyway – to explain cases of urgency, like his TRAIN case. But then, one question that arises is why not stick to the more general explanation for all cases? After all, norms modifying the all things considered appropriate degree of a gradable property for proper action can work both upwards and downwards: the moral norm, for instance, can modify the proper maximum speed set by the traffic norm both upwards and downwards. If that is the case, we get a nice parallel picture for assertion, when considering the TRAIN and the ASPIRIN2 case.

6.4 Conclusion

This last chapter has compared the extant explanations of the contextualist data on theoretical grounds.

The view defended in this thesis was shown to do better than knowledge sensitivism on theoretical considerations pertaining to parsimony and prior plausibility. Further on, I have looked at pragmatic and epistemic WAMs and pointed out some fairly serious problems they are facing, concerning generality in the case of the former and fit with mainstream value theory in the case of the latter.

The KK strategy was shown to commit its champions to a set of fairly problematic theoretical assumptions. At the same time, doubts about both the necessity and the sufficiency claim at stake in the KK line were put forth. Finally, I went on a rescue mission on behalf of the KK champion, and argued that, in its most plausible incarnation, the KK account will come down to a slightly more specific version of the view defended in this dissertation.

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